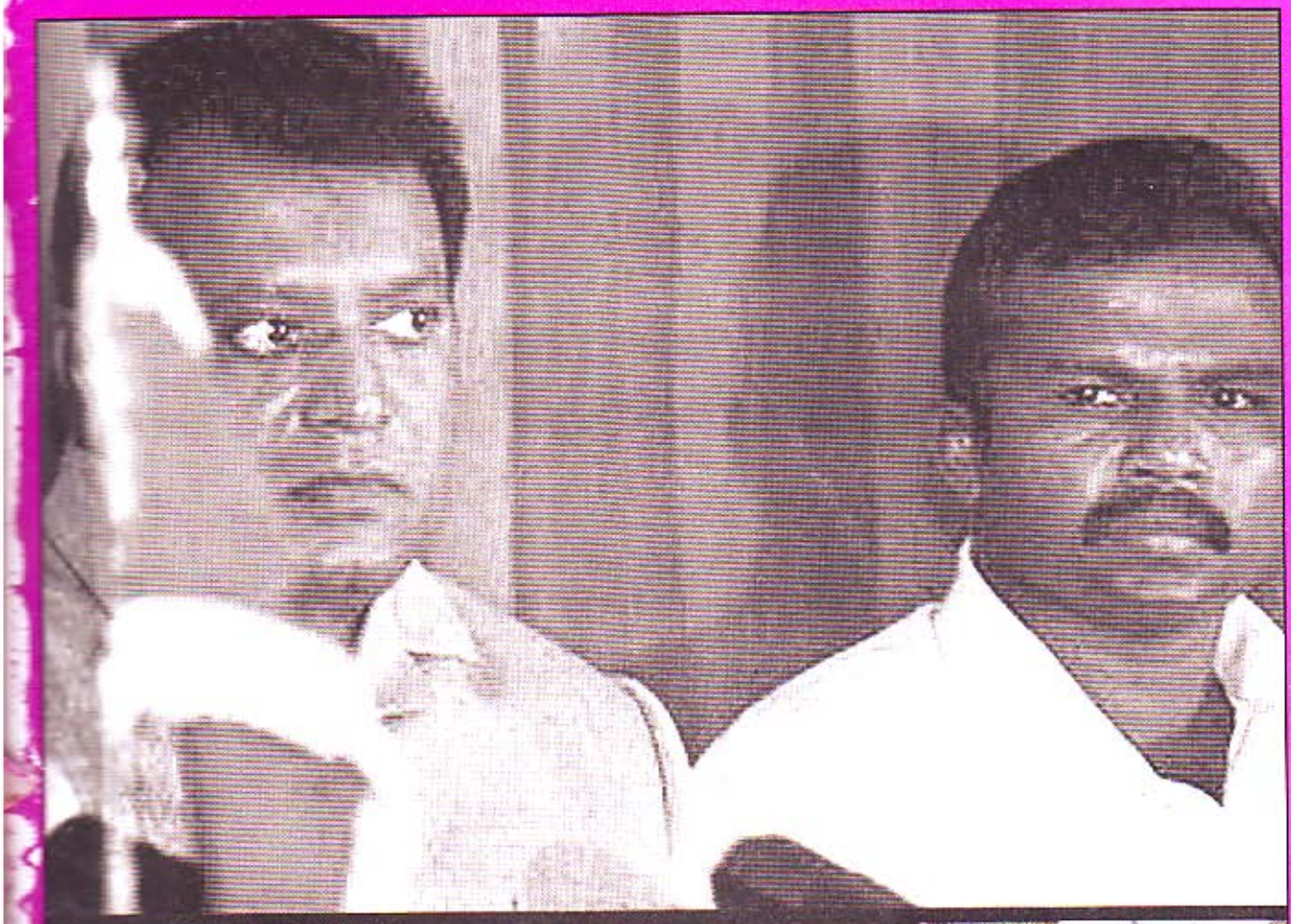
Tamil TIMES

VOL XXIII No.3 ISSN 0266-4488 MARCH 2004 90p

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka ..... £15/US$25
Australia ..... Aus$45
(Australian Bank cheques only)
USA ..... US$35
Canada ..... Can$40
All other countries ..... £20/US$35



The Leader & the Rebel

LTTE leader V Pirapaharan and his Special Commander Col. Karuna

TAPROBANE TRAVEL
Sri Lanka Tours

TAPROBANE TRAVEL 1977 27 2004 ANNIVERSARY

The Undisputed No: 1 Agent For Flights To Sri Lanka

Top Agent For Sri Lankan Airlines For 12 Consecutive Years Since 1991

Spring/Summer Fares to Colombo & Beyond

Colombo with Sri Lankan Airlines

SriLankan Airlines

From £450 +Taxes — *Valid till 3 Apr & 12 Apr-30 Jun 04*
(Does not include free trip)

From £478+ Taxes — *Valid till 3 Apr & 12 Apr-15 Jul 04*
Includes free trip to one of the following destinations: -
Madras/Trichchi/Trivandrum/Kochi/Bombay
Delhi/Karachi/Bangkok/Singapore/Kuala Lampur/Jakarta/Hong Kong

Promotional Fares to India & Far East

Stop over in Colombo not permitted Valid till 3 Apr &12 Apr-30 Jun

Madras/Trichi/T'drum/Bangalore/Kochi from	***£415 + Taxes***
Bombay from	***£418 + Taxes***
Delhi from	***£438 + Taxes***
Bangkok/Singapore/Kuala Lumpur from	***£400 + Taxes***

Colombo Return

Colombo Return
Valid from 10 Apr -30 June only
Validity 1 month-
must return by 30 Jun
SKYWARDS
From only £250 + Taxes
Plus 10,000 skyward miles
Business class from £935 + Taxes
SriLankan Airlines

QATAR AIRWAYS *From* ***£380 + Taxes***
Valid 10 Jan-31 Mar &
11 Apr -30 Jun

Emirates *From* ***£478 + Taxes***
Valid till 03 Apr/12 Apr-15 Jul
& 20 Aug-9 Dec

NEW **Colombo/London/Colombo**
From £300 + £52 Taxes
Valid for inbound travel only
1 Mar-30 Apr
QATAR AIRWAYS

NEW ZEALAND *Valid till 30 Jun only*
SriLankan Airlines
Via Melbourne or Brisbane ***From £748 + Taxes***
Via Sydney ***From £ 943 + Taxes***

For Reservations Contact our Travel Consultants
Kamini, Upali, Chris, Leoni or Lucky
Tel: 020 7437 6272, 020 7734 9078
19 Golden Square London W1F 9HD
Emergency phone service for immediate travel only - 07860 439 483
www.srilankatours.co.uk/www.srilankans.co.uk

IATA

ATOL PROTECTED

"I do not agree with a word of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it."
-Voltaire

Tamil TIMES

ISSN 0266 - 44 88
Vol. XXIII No.3
MARCH 2004

Published by:
TAMIL TIMES LTD
PO Box 121, Sutton,
Surrey SM1 3TD
United Kingdom
Phone: 020 - 8644 0972
Fax: 020 - 8241 4557

Email: prajan@gn.apc.org
editor@tamiltimes.org
admin@tamiltimes.org
Website: http://www.tamiltimes.org

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka.....£15/US$25
Australia.....Aus$45
(Australian Bank cheques only)
USA.....US$35
Canada.....Can$40
All other countries..... £20.US$35

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor or publishers. The publishers assume no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, photographs or artwork.

CONTENTS

For a free and fair election	03
General Election 2004	04
Revolt in the LTTE	12
Election related violence	22
The April Fool's Election	25
Tamil nationalism	30
Election & the national question	31
Split in the LTTE	33
Dim prospect for peace	35
Classified	38

For a free and fair election

The ongoing parliamentary election campaign has been overshadowed by the news of the split in the LTTE. The rebellion mounted by one of its most powerful commanders, Colonel Karuna, who was in overall charge of the LTTE's military and political operations in eastern Sri Lanka, took everyone by surprise. Even the Sri Lanka's Army Chief is reported to have been 'stunned' by the development. More than anyone else, it must be the LTTE's hitherto unchallenged supreme leader, Velupillai Pirpaharan, who must have felt the worst when his favoured champion military commander turned 'traitor' and declared virtual unilateral independence defecting with an estimated five to six thousand cadres of the LTTE and calling for the right of self-determination for the people of eastern Sri Lanka. The breathtaking nature, size and significance of the challenge mounted by Colonel Karuna and his loyalists is unprecedented in the history of the LTTE, which is a highly regimented and tightly nit organisation known for the iron discipline of its cadres whose unquestioning loyalty to the leader is valued more than their life itself.

It was therefore not surprising that the campaign for the 2 April general election came to a grinding halt especially in the northeast of the island. The campaign by the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) was in disarray for a number of days. Particularly difficult was for the contingent of the TNA candidates contesting the Batticaloa-Amparai region where pressure from the Karuna faction demanded their allegiance.

The TNA with the full backing of the LTTE is by far the major force that is contesting in the northeast. The LTTE for the first time in its history is actively participating in the election campaign. Through the vehicle of the TNA, it has fielded its own candidates who are contesting on a manifesto known to have been drawn up and approved by its leadership. The manifesto declares the "LTTE's leadership as the national leadership of the Tamil Eelam Tamils and the Liberation Tigers as the sole and authentic representatives of the Tamil people", and demands the acceptance 'in toto' of the ISGA (Interim Self Governing Authority) proposals put forward by the LTTE. Tamil Tiger cadres and activists are day in and day out actively engaged in the election campaign which covers the entirety of the northeast, both government and LTTE controlled areas. The TNA candidates have at their disposal the LTTE's massive resources, including its infrastructure and personnel.

While the entry of the of LTTE into the democratic electoral process has been widely welcomed as a positive shift from its hitherto held strategy, what is disturbing is the climate of intimidation and violence that candidates belonging to non-TNA are facing. After two assassinations attributed to the LTTE in the Batticaloa region - one a UNF candidate and the other an EPDP campaigner – at the beginning of the campaign, mercifully no other killings have been reported. However, while TNA candidates enjoy all the freedom and opportunity to hold meetings and engage in house to house campaigning, there have been justifiable complaints authenticated by independent monitoring organisations that in the Tamil areas of the northeast, candidates belonging to the non-TNA parties are prevented from campaigning freely and they have become victims of various forms of intimidation reportedly by LTTE cadres and activists. Pressure has been brought upon owners of motor vehicles and three-wheelers not to hire them to non-TNA candidates or their supporters.

Due to fear of threatened assassinations and other forms of violence, holding meetings or engaging in house to house campaigning have become virtually impossible for candidates belonging to the EPDP and the Anandasangari Independent Group. Persons allegedly associated with the LTTE go about in unlicensed motor cars and motorcycles without number plates rounding up volunteers supporting non-TNA candidates. Leaflets in support of them are snatched away and set alight. In an exercise of threatening and intrusive monitoring, others with video cameras go about filming and noting down those who go into the offices of these candidates or attend their meetings. Leaders of the non-TNA parties have complained that they have been compelled to be confined within their offices and rely on newspaper advertisements in their campaign. Even though these areas are said to be government controlled, non-TNA candidates have been unable get the protection of the security forces to enable them to engage in their campaign trail. While these intimidatory and violent methods are being practised on a generalised scale the chances of a free and fair election taking place on 2 April appear to be nil, and the outcome would appear to be preordained.

International election monitors are on the ground and they are likely report as to the availability of the opportunity for a free and fair election campaign, and as to the free and fair nature of the election itself on 2 April. The credibility of the mandate and legitimacy that the LTTE is seeking through the ballot box will be fatally undermined if TNA candidates are found to have won seats by the use of such anti-democratic tactics during the election campaign and malpractices that may take place on election day itself.

GENERAL ELECTION 2004

Record number of candidates

A record 6,024 candidates have entered the electoral fray representing 24 political parties and 192 independent groups, the Elections Commission said.

The number of candidates running is at its highest since the first parliamentary elections held in 1947 leading to the grant of independence from Britain in 1948. A total of 4,943 candidates were in the fray for the December 2001 vote and 5,477 registered in the October 2000 vote.

The number of seats in parliament remains unchanged at 225, but the number of voters has increased to 12.89 million from 12.42 million eligible to vote in the December 2001 polls.

One novel aspect of this election has been the entry of some 281 Buddhist monks contesting the 225 parliamentary seats under the banner of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU). Their ostentatious use of symbols of Buddhism, including the Buddhist flag, in their campaign trail has drawn flack from other political parties.

377 women who have handed in their nominations to contest the April 2 election. This figure is a significant increase from previous elections, as there were only 52 women candidates who participated for the December 5, 2001, according to Elections Department sources.

According to available information, 15 women from the UNF are contesting the election while 10 are contesting from the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA).

Several women candidates are taking part in the election as independents. Five women are contesting from Jaffna, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee, under the Tamil National Alliance banner.

There are 26 seats up for grabs in the embattled north-east where the minority Tamils are concentrated while the total number of seats in parliament is 225. With the island's majority Sinhalese community split equally between the two major parties of the President and her Prime Minister, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), with the official backing of the Tamil Tigers, contesting in the Tamil-dominated Northeast are hoping to emerge as the 'king-makers' after the election. Whether this hope will materialise in the context of the recent split in the LTTE remains to be seen.

Polling stations in no-man's land

The Elections Commissioner has decided to cluster the polling stations in no-man's land (lying between government and LTTE held areas) in the North and East to enable voters residing in areas under the control of the LTTE to caste their votes in the April 2 general elections.

Reportedly about 260 thousand voters reside in the LTTE controlled areas in the northeast province. LTTE had requested the authorities to locate polling stations within the areas under its control. The LTTE sought the assistance of Norway and other international agencies to bring pressure upon the Sri Lanka election authorities to set up polling stations to in areas under its control. However, because of the problems relating to the manning and supervision of these polling stations, the Commissioner of Election has decided to locate polling stations in no-man zones.

The Elections Department took the view that polling booths under the supervision of independent election monitors cannot be had LTTE controlled areas as requested by the LTTE as it was compulsory to have Police protection for these polling booths.

However, due to the Ceasefire Agreement in force between the government and the LTTE, the police are unable to enter the LTTE controlled areas armed and in uniform.

At least two policemen are to man each polling station in order to provide security on election day. Unless the LTTE agreed to lift this prohibition imposed by the CFA, it was not possible to set up polling stations in those areas.

Some other Tamil political parties and independent groups which are contesting in the Northeast also objected to having polling stations within LTTE-controlled areas. Their position is that unless they are also given the opportunity of freedom of movement within those areas to freely campaign among the people, then it would not be a free and fair election.

President plays down fears of war

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and the UNF which he leads have raised the spectre of war between government forces and the Tamil Tigers if the UPFA led by President Chandrika Kumaratunga won a majority of seats in the forthcoming elections and came to power. The basis of the Premier's campaign has been that it was the Ceasefire Agreement which he signed with the LTTE leader Velupillai Pirapaharan in February 2002 that had provided a period of peace which in turn provided the opportunity for his government to take measures for the recovery of the island's ailing economy.

The Prime Minister says that UPFA's decision to enter into talks with the LTTE without any conditions will lead the country to another war bloodier than that began in 1995. "In 2001, when we decided to talk with the LTTE, we initiated the Peace process with a clear agenda and with an aim. As a result the LTTE decided to come into the peace process leaving behind 20 years of fighting. No matter what arose both parties decided to stick to these conditions. Besides that the condition that we agreed received recognition from the international community and the United Nations," said Mr. Wickremesinghe.

Addressing election meetings, he said that the conditions agreed to by his government and the LTTE included the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, the creation of a Federal State, change the war atmosphere in the North and East in order to bring normalcy to civilian life there, and come to a final solution within the democratic framework. Our conditions also included the participation of representatives of the Muslim community living in the North and East. These conditions laid down a strong basis for the continuation of the peace process", the Prime Minister said.

However, the President and the coalition she leads have played down fears of war resuming if they were returned to power. They have also promised to continue with the peace process and make efforts to resume negotiations with the LTTE.

The President in an interview with The Hindu asserted that her party would engage in the "continuation of the stalled talks, continuation of the foreign facilitation and monitors; we will also continue ... the process of constant consultation with the Indian government or other foreign governments that we consider our friends."

The President also said, "We will tell the LTTE quite openly

and frankly what we can offer them - at least a framework. The rest have to be left for discussions. We can't expect the LTTE to accept everything we say. As we did the two times before, we would at least keep a flexible time frame. We cannot say we are going to stop this day and get up and go. But we certainly try to agree on a generally broad time frame - targeted dates. We would definitely have a more transparent and inclusive process and we will quite definitely insist on respecting human rights. Obviously we will insist that the LTTE also does that."

Asked as to how the Alliance would work together given the acknowledged differences between the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, the President said, "Well, I was also very anxious, but what has happened up to now gives me hope that we could work with them. We have agreed on almost all the major issues. They are very committed to a negotiated settlement of the ethnic problem. They are committed to not going back to war - the JVP. The only sticking point is that they are more for decentralisation of power and we are for devolution of power. We will not give up our total commitment to devolution. But we have persuaded the JVP to agree that during this negotiations process with the LTTE and the rest of the country separately, they would agree to the majority consensus view. I think that's going a long way. We have gone much further with the JVP than Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe did with the LTTE."

The President's top advisor Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar, who currently holds the portfolio of Minister of Communications and Mass Media, accused her arch Prime Minister, of indulging in a kind of war-mongering by creating a "fear psychosis" that the country could slip back into war.

"The choice is not the simplistic one, as the Prime Minister would like us to believe, of peace with him or else war. Is he really saying vote for me or there will be war," he asked at a press conference in Colombo.

Kadirgamar also said the President and her party were not going to make any "drastic changes" to the role of the facilitatory role which Norway had been playing in bringing warring parties to the negotiating table, although the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) which is a constituent member the President's coalition had called for a "thorough review" of Norway's role in the peace process. .

PM wants a 'stronger mandate'

"Give us a strong mandate on April 2 with a large and resounding victory to protect your future, your family's future and the durable peace we all long for," Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said unveiling the United National Front (UNF) manifesto titled 'the UNP Work Programme for the Nation.' "This is not an election propaganda sheet, but a complete work programme by the UNP and the constituent parties of the UNF to build the nation", the Premier said.

"At the 2001 Elections the UNF presented the people a programme for a New Economic Future and A New Social Order. This was a six- year programme based upon the normal life of a Parliament. After a tough campaign during which the PA used all the mechanisms of state against us, including the state media, you gave your verdict and gave us the mandate to form a Government and implement the programme," he said.

"Soon after that momentous election I told the nation that the work ahead was similar to that of a farmer. The first year would be one of preparing fallow land. The second year would be one of sowing the seeds and in the third year the first fruits of all this hard work would start to appear. Nothing has changed. The first year was spent bringing a ceasefire to our war-torn country and repairing a damaged and contracting economy. It was also a time of planning and looking more closely at the type of Sri Lanka we wished to build within the context of our manifesto. The second year was one of consolidation, sowing the seeds of many development projects and continuing the work of repairing the economy. We were just two years into our six-year programme when disaster struck."

"Just as we were about to enter the third year with a well structured Budget the President decided to destabilize the country. All at once the peace looked less stable, the value of the Rupee fell, the Stock Market crashed and investors fled the country. The hopes for budget had to be re-written. According to independent observers the effect of the President's actions in November last year was to cost the country Rs. 47.5 billion, or Rs. 10,000 for every family in 2004 alone.

"The effect was shattering. The work of the government almost stalled, development projects had to be put on hold and donors such as the IMF decided to withhold their pledged funding because of the instability.

"By the end of January we were just starting to get our programme back into action when the President acted again and called the fourth election in five years. This election has to be the most unnecessary and unwanted election in the history of our country. It has denied you the many benefits resulting from the peaceful atmosphere that were starting to come through. It has disrupted the all important 'A' Levels which are so important to our young people and above all the election will cost around Rs. 650 million.

As we pass the second anniversary of the ceasefire agreement many people have taken peace for granted. Truthfully there is much work still to be completed and many complex negotiations to be had before peace will finally be ours, the PM said.

"The peace process depends on the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA), and other agreements such as the Tokyo Declaration, if the SLFP-JVP Alliance intends to reject or amend the CFA, the donor nations would not approve it and hence we would not receive any aid, if the Alliance comes to power they would have to walk the path of peace alone without the support of the international community," he said.

He said that the Tokyo Declaration signed at the Tokyo Donor parley was arrived at after agreeing to ten conditions including maintaining and protection of the CFA, a separate delegation for the Muslim Community, a federal set-up within a unitary state, improvement of human rights situation, north-east rehabilitation and returning to normalcy.

"We planned to get into the core issue to find a political settlement to the ethnic issue in this year and talks were scheduled in January. All was foiled because of the political upheaval triggered by the President due to JVP's pressure. Only two options are open for you, to continue with the peace process and form a stable society for greater economic growth, or an unstable Alliance Government, prone to war," the PM said.

TNA Election Manifesto

Asserting the LTTE as the "sole, legitimate and authentic representatives" of the Tamil people, and accepting their leadership as the "Tamil national leadership", the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) urged that a just solution to the national ethnic question based on recognition to the "Tamil speaking people's homeland, the Tamils' identity as a distinct nation, and right to self-determination".

Unanimously resolving to "support the LTTE leadership in its endeavours for a safe and dignified future of the Tamil people," the TNA stressed in its manifesto, released on 1 March, that if the

"military and state oppression" continue and if the 'legitimate and just aspirations of the Tamils are continued to be denied,' then self-determination of the Tamil people in their homeland would be inevitable to ensure their freedom and integrity.

Making an undisguised threat to form an independent Tamil state if the Government rejects the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people, the manifesto stated, "If the Government rejects the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people and continues to deny them an acceptable political solution; and if military occupation and state oppression continue instead, then establishing the sovereignty and independence of the Tamil nation on the basis of its right to self determination would become an inexorable reality,"

The TNA manifesto urged the Sinhala political leaderships to accept in full the LTTE's proposals for an Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) in the North-East and resume the presently stalled peace talks soon and set up the ISGA to immediately address the humanitarian need of the war-hit people.

The five-page TNA manifesto also urged that that the arrangements should be made to remove the High Security Zone (HSZ) in the North-East "with immediate effect," to facilitate the internally displaced people to return to their original habitations and to remove all military restrictions in freedom of movement, both in the land and sea.

Calling upon the international community to come forward to directly assist the pressing humanitarian needs and other development projects for the people in the North-East without waiting until the final resolution of conflict, the TNA manifesto pleaded with the foreign nations to remove the ban imposed on the LTTE, enabling them to engage in negotiations with the Sri Lankan state "with pride as an official and equal partners."

The manifesto said the solution to the ethnic conflict should ensure the rights of Muslims in a bid to address the Eastern Muslim fears about discrimination by the LTTE dominated interim administration.

"The TNA has a clear stand on the Muslim question. An acceptable solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka should necessarily ensure the distinct identity of the Muslim people, their security, the culture and their economy," the Tamilnet quoted ACTC MP Gajendra Kumar Ponnambalam as commenting his party's stance on the Muslim question.

Calling the Tamil people to identify and reject the "selfish and opportunistic" Tamil forces that "are functioning among the Tamil people as puppets of the Sinhala parties against the will of the people," the TNA invited the people in the North-East to unite under one umbrella and vote for the TNA.

In the dissolved parliament of 225-members, the TNA had 15 seats, and in the forthcoming election on 2 April it hopes to win many more seats. As the southern based two main political parties are equally divided, the TNA relishes the prospect of emerging as the "king-makers" after the polls.

Although the LTTE is not directly contesting in the forthcoming general elections, it has openly stated that it would back the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and, in fact, is campaigning for the TNA in the North-East.

UPFA seeks mandate to frame new Constitution

The United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA), in its 44-page manifesto outlining 17 subjects, Election Manifesto said that it was seeking a mandate of the people at the April 2 parliamentary election to convene a Constituent Assembly to formulate a new Constitution that will end the executive presidency. It also intends to introduce electoral reforms to re-introduce the parliamentary form of government. After the formulation of the new Constitution, it will be presented to the people for their views and suggestions and after amendments the draft Constitution will be placed before the people at a Referendum before enactment.

The Manifesto also assured that the ceasefire with the LTTE would continue to stand and pledged to start talks with the LTTE immediately, with an inclusive, transparent process while stressing that the unity and integrity of the country would not be negotiable.

UPFA's election manifesto was released in Colombo on 11 March at a well attended gathering of the Alliance leaders representing ten political parties and groups.

The Manifesto rejects separatism and the concept of homeland confined to a particular community but offered to talk with the LTTE reiterating its stand that it would enter into a process of negotiation with the LTTE and other groups to reach consensus on what the SLFP-JVP led alliance described as reasonable proposals. They have pledged transparency in the negotiations.

The principles on which the Constitution would be based on the acceptance of Sri Lanka as the homeland of all Sri Lankans, a commitment to democracy, pluralism and human rights and human security and dignity. As in the current constitution, the foremost place will be given to Buddhism, while assuring adherents of all religions the rights guaranteed by the present Constitution. Sinhala and Tamil will be Official Languages and English will be a National language.

The Manifesto stated that a Bill of Rights that would in addition to civil and political rights, include social, economic and cultural rights and provide effective remedies against their violation or denial. Provision will be made for ensuring the rights of women, children, the handicapped and other disadvantaged sections of society.

The manifesto contains a detailed plan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the North and East, though a major part of the manifesto deals with ways and means of reviving the national economy.

Among the rehabilitation work are provisions for low cost housing for 15,000 families reconstruction of damaged schools and buildings, low interest credit facilities for families, strengthening vocational and technical education and developing hospitals.

The main economic policies would be to stop privatisation of national resources, achieve self-sufficiency in food crops, develop small and medium scale industries and formulate a 5-year National Economic Development Programme.

On foreign policy, the Manifesto states, it will be designed to safeguard the Sovereignty and Independence of Sri Lanka. While maintaining the dignity and self-respect of our country and people, every effort will be made to promote friendship and goodwill with all States and international organisations.

The policy will ensure that our foreign policy will not endanger the sovereignty and independence of our neighbouring States but rather preserve and expand our existing goodwill with our neighbours in the spheres of political, economic and cultural relations. Sri Lanka will collaborate with all those States which advocate a multilateral, rather than a unilateral, approach to the resolution of problems affecting the international community of States.

Sri Lanka will be a party to all such international conventions, treaties and agreements, that would promote the political and economic objectives of our country; in particular, conven-

tions, treaties and agreements dealing with terrorism, crime and law enforcement, the prevention of money laundering, the prohibition of dealings in narcotics and other pernicious drugs, economic and social relations, the alleviation of poverty and gender equality.

"Sri Lanka will be a party to convention treaties and agreements dealing with the protection of children, the disadvantaged and the handicapped and the preservation of the environment in all its aspects.

As a matter of high priority the Freedom Alliance will ensure that Sri Lanka accedes to the United Nations Convention against corruption thus ending the shameful situation in which Sri Lanka has placed itself by not being among the large number of States that have already signed the Convention.

TNA rejects UPFA manifesto

Tamil National Alliance (TNA) have rejected the manifesto of the United Peoples' Freedom Alliance (UPFA), describing it as a 'document that means nothing' to the Tamils.

Members of the TNA said the manifesto that was released with a big fanfare by the UPFA has no indication as to how it plans to solve the national crisis which they said is the ethnic issue.

The TNA is of the view the manifesto is only a document that has nothing to offer to solve the minority question in Sri Lanka.

The TNA also said the word devolution shockingly does not appear anywhere in the manifesto making it clear the SLFP has completely caved into the JVP.

"It does not specifically spell out strategy to meet the aspirations of the Tamil people in the north and east and also has no mention of any kind of strategies to sort out the national issue," former Batticaloa district member of parliament Joseph Pararajasingham said.

He said though the manifesto talks of 'continuing the peace process' and 'continuing talks with the Tigers', the manifesto does not give details as to how the UPFA intends implementing this. "It merely talks of 'doing things' but 'how' it plans to do and 'when' are not spoken about," he said.

He says the vital issue which is the LTTE's submission of the north east interim administration authority proposal has not been mentioned anywhere in the UPFA manifesto.

"In totality this manifesto has not clearly indicated what and how it plans to solve the ethnic crisis that is vital to the nation in general and Tamil people in particular," Pararajasingham said.

A manifesto to restore 'Dharma Rajya'

With elections come the party manifestos that seek to promise the voting public many things, but a unique manifesto came into being on March 2 in the historic city of Kandy, where a collective of Buddhist monks launched their manifesto - a blueprint for the restoration of the flagging Buddhasasana.

The manifesto, was launched by the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) at a special religious ceremony attended by thousands of Buddhist monks and lay people - all sharing the single mission of restoring Buddhasasana and promoting Buddhism.

Aimed at forming a "Dharma Rajya," the JHU manifesto stresses that the country should be ruled according to the Buddhist principles and the protection of the Buddhasasana should be the foremost duty of any government.

The manifesto draws attention to the issue of unethical conversions and states that while it should be considered illegal, persons of all faiths and religions must have the right to practice their respective religions.

According to JHU Colombo District Leader, Ven. Uduwe Dhammaloka Thero, the manifesto - the first of its kind had to be drafted to inform the people of the existing threats to the Buddhasasana and even individual monks, "This was the last resort. Our entry into politics was a decision taken with much reluctance. But, now that we are in it, we are going before the people, explaining as to what led to our decision and spell out what we should do to create a Dharma Rajya here."

The JHU, he said is most concerned about not having Sri Lanka divided, an issue that has been addressed in the manifesto. "In case the country's security is in jeopardy, the armed forces should have the right to act accordingly without the interference of the politicians," states the manifesto.

In addition, it also pledges that such a Dharma Rajya would, while granting the Sinhalese their hereditary rights, also protect the rights of other communities inhabiting the island - in keeping with Emperor Ashoka's concept of "every citizen being his child,"

The bhikkus are also urging through their party declaration that any elected government should monitor the functions and monetary transactions of all the NGOs; there should be decentralisation of administration - a far cry from the extensive power devolution offered by the two main political forces and the creation of an economy founded upon Buddhist principles.

What's more, the monks have also paid attention to the aspect of developing local farmers and entrepreneurs in order to create an economic structure that is identifiable with the country along with an education system that complements the 2,500 year-old Buddhist culture that has survived here.

"Lord Buddha has adviced enough on how to become a successful and spiritual layman. People are forgetting that so much had been said about leading a good lay life. We are just attempting to remind the people of their duty, and the leaders of their duty," noted Ven. Dhammaloka Thero.

The monks believe that the spiritual degradation in the country could be overcome only by the strong application of the five precepts - the basic five rules for a lay Buddhist.

As a measure to ensure the perpetuation of the dhamma and the continuity of monks who are worthy of the robe they don, the JHU manifesto also urges that a "Dharma Sangayana" should be held to cleanse "monkhood."

Call for ban on use of Buddhist flag

A delegation of Buddhist monks, organized by several Bhikku and civil organizations, on Monday, 16 March handed over a letter, addressed to the Commissioner of Elections, requesting him to stop the Jathika Hela Urumaya using the Buddhist flag in their election campaign.

Since the Commissioner was not available at the time of their visit, due to having to attend a meeting with returning officers, the delegation handed over their petition to a deputy commissioner, who had promised the delegation that their request would be forwarded to the Elections Commissioner and necessary actions would be taken without delay, Handugala Rathanapala Thero said.

"The Buddhist flag was respected by all political parties and it is an internationally recognized symbol of Buddhism and not a symbol for a group of power-hungry robe-bearers. Since the JHU has a colour, symbol and a flag to symbolize their campaign, they must be stopped from making use of the Buddhist flag," Handugala Rathanapala Thero, who led the delegation to Elections Commissioner, told journalists.

The JHU's immoral act of using symbols of Buddhism in their run-up to Parliament violates the existing election norms. The JHU displays the Buddhist flags in front of their party offices. "The Buddhist flag is sacred and it should not be used to

decorate a party office. The JHU has no right to decorate their party offices with Buddhist flags just because their candidates are robe-bearers," Rathanapala Thero said. "This act is anti-Buddhist and will definitely be an insult to the Buddhism," he said.

The Secretary of the National Bhikku Front, Kalawelgala Chandraloka Thero said that a group of Buddhist monks now go from house to house with begging bowls seeking votes. Concerned citizens must take action to stop this anti-Buddhist act. "Monks campaigning for Parliamentary seats are performing an anti-Sasana act. This clearly leads to the division amongst the sangha as many including Mahanayakes have condemned their move," Chandraloka Thero said.

"People in this country are confronted with a very important election, where they can decide who should be selected for the next term of parliament. At this juncture, several power hungry monks have decided to capitalize on religious feelings to become MPs," the Thero said.

The Movement for Protecting Buddhist Rights (MPBR) expressed strong opposition against the JHU using the Buddhist flag in their political campaign. "A group of Bhikkus contesting for seats in parliament have now started using the Buddhist flag in their political campaign. This is a shameless act. Mahanayakes of all Chapters must come forward immediately to stop the Buddhist flag being used for political gains," Convenor of the MPBR, Sirimalgoda Wimalajothi said.

The Forum for Securing Buddhism (FSB) also opposed the JHU's move of using Buddhist symbols in the election propaganda. "The Buddhist flag will lose its value and sanctity; all Buddhist must stop the JHU making use of the religious symbol to win votes," Secretary of the FSB, Ambanghawelle Sasanarathana Thero said.

Muslims want referendum on North-East merger

The split in the LTTE has also rekindled another long disputed issue – whether the Northern and Eastern provinces should continue to remain merged as a single administrative unit.

The Council of Muslims of Sri Lanka has urged President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to hold a referendum on the day of the general elections in the Eastern Province to decide whether North East should be de-merged or not.

The council in a statement said the majority of the people in the East believed that the Province should become independent of the North. The Muslims feel that the merger of the two provinces has resulted in the Muslims being dominated by the Tamils.

"Muslims will be happy for the East to be demerged from the North as their population in the Eastern province stands at 40.1% - in the districts of Digamadulla 41.58%; Trincomalee 40.19%; and Batticaloa 36.13%."

The issue has been raised following LTTE's ex Eastern Commander Karuna's insistence that the people of the east in Batticaloa and Amparai districts should have autonomy from the North.

The statement said, "Now Karuna of LTTE of the Eastern Province has expressed his desire that he and his people of Digamadulla and Batticaloa should be independent. Therefore the Council call upon the President and the Prime Minister to hold a Referendum in the Eastern Province to decide as to whether the North East should be de-merged or not. This is of national importance today."

"The Merger of North East was made temporarily according to Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord on the basis that a Referendum would be held in one year and this Referendum is long over-due. In my opinion it could be held at any time. Further according to the Constitution Article 86 the President may submit to people a Referendum on any matter which in the opinion of the President is of national importance."

"The President and the Prime Minister in the interest of Muslims, Tamils and Sinhalese of the Eastern Province should hold the Referendum with Col. Karuna's claim for "Southern Tamil Eelam" and his desire that he and his people want to be independent. I am of the view that there is consensus in the Eastern Province among all peoples that the North East should be de-merged."

The referendum has to be conducted by the Commissioner of Elections and an additional ballot could be included at the forthcoming elections in the East for people to take a decision on the issue of de-merger," the statement said.

EU laments failure to appoint Independent Elections Commission

The European Union which sent observer missions for the last two general elections condemned the failure to appoint an independent election commission which could have checked abuses at the April 2 polls.

The EU's chief observer John Cushnahan told a news conference in Colombo on 11 March that they had hoped significant changes would have taken place, especially the appointment of the independent election commission to enforce a code of ethics for political party contestants and others.

He said the reasons were clear but the European Union had expected action in this regard. "Despite the recommendations not being implemented, we have once again returned to Sri Lanka and not least of all because the EU is aware of the deep commitment to the democratic process that is shared by the ordinary people of Sri Lanka," Mr. Cushnahan said. The chief observer said they came back as they strongly supported the strengthening of democracy and improving human rights throughout the world.

Mr. Cushnahan said the EU observers would pay particular attention to the problems such as abuse of state resources, unequal access to the media, electoral violence, problems with voter registration and lack of access to certain polling stations. In this respect he appealed to all political parties to act in a way to ensure an election free from intimidation and malpractice.

"If the country's political parties wish to pay more than lip service to condemning electoral violence then they could voluntarily agree on a code of conduct to be implemented during the present election campaign," he added.

The 70-strong EU mission would be posted to all parts of the country and work closely with the other monitoring groups, Mr. Cushnahan said. He assured that whatever the problems the independence of the EU mission would not be compromised.

He also said the EU mission did not require security though election violence appeared to be on the rise. Mr. Cushnahan said his team would hold discussions with political party leaders, elections officials and the other monitoring groups.

EU observers would be deployed across the country in teams of two to monitor the opening of polling stations, the voting process, the counting of ballots, and the tabulation of votes at local and national level, he said.

Eschew violence, says National Christian Council

The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka has appealed to candidates at the forthcoming elections to eschew violence and conduct themselves in a manner that benefits the high office they seek.

In a press release, they called upon the people to reject can-

SRILANKAN'S NO1 PREFERRED TRAVEL AGENT

CARLTON LEISURE

Worldwide Travel & Tours

IATA 4568 ATOL PROTECTED

MAIN AGENT FOR SriLankan Airlines, Qatar Airways, ROYAL JORDANIAN, CSA CESKE AEROLINIE, IBERIA, Asiana Airlines

"Fly with us once, Fly with us always"

£ 415 + taxes
MADRAS, TRIVANDRUM, COCHIN, BANGALORE, TRICHI
(01 Jan - 3 Apr)

COLOMBO
£ 478 + taxes
FREE extensions to any one of thefollowing destinations
Madras, Trichi, Trivandrum, Singapore, Bangkok, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur or Hong Kong.

PROMOTIONAL FARES

COLOMBO
£ 450 + taxes
(Valid till 3rd Apr & 12th Apr. - 30th June)

£400 + taxes
BANGKOK, SINGAPORE
KUALA LUMPUR, JAKARTA
(01 Jan - 3 Apr) (12 Apr - 30 Jun)

SriLankan Airlines
£ 450 + taxes COLOMBO
(Valid till 3 Apr. & 12 Apr to 30 Jun)
£ 528 + taxes FLY TO FAR EAST
INCLUDING FREE TRIP TO COLOMBO
Madras, Trichi or Trivandrum.
£ 458 + taxes FLY TO SINGAPORE
INCLUDING FREE TRIP TO MADRAS, TRICHI OR TRIVANDRUM.

Qatar Airways
£ 360+ taxes
KUALA LUMPUR
SINGAPORE
(10 Jan- 31 Mar)

COLOMBO
£ 380+ taxes
(10 Jan- 31 Mar)

£ 1350+ taxes
COLOMBO
BUSINESS CLASS
(1 Jan- 1Apr)

SPECIAL TOUR PACKAGES
Please call our hotline 020 8429 2797
E-mail: tours@carltonleisure.com

Fly SriLankan Airlines FOR £250
Business Class £935
Terms & Conditions Apply
- Economy Class 10000 Skyward miles
- Business Class 15000 Skywards miles

CYPRUS AIRWAYS
COLOMBO
£335+ taxes
(10 Jan -31 May)

TORONTO SPECIAL OFFER
BUY ONE GET FREE
£259+ taxes
Dep - 03 May / 07 May
Offer valid until 31 March
FLY DIRECT TO TORONTO
£219+ taxes

SPECIAL FARES

DUBAI	£ 220 + taxes	SYDNEY	£ 485 + taxes
FLORIDA	£ 249 + taxes	MELBOURNE	£ 485 + taxes
BANGKOK	£ 310 + taxes	PERTH	£ 475 + taxes
NEW YORK	£ 145 + taxes	AUCKLAND	£ 485 + taxes
K'LUMPUR	£ 300 + taxes	(07 Apr - 30 Jun)	

TOUR PACKAGES

15 DAYSRAJASTHAN (The country of Maharajas)	£ 750
8 DAYS GOABEACHES	£ 149
8 DAYS DISCOVER BALI	£ 149
10 DAYS MYSTICAL NEPAL	£ 599
15 DAYS RAJASTHAN (3 Days Free Holiday in DOHAL)	£ 750
13 DAYS VENICE OF THE EAST (Special KERALA tour)	£ 599
8 DAYS WHITE SANDY BEACHES (MAURITIUS)	£ 499

TOUR PACKAGES

5 DAYS	BANGKOK	£ 139
	KUALA LUMPUR	£ 139
	SINGAPORE	£ 139
7 DAYS	LANGKAWI	£ 114
	PENANG	£ 114
	PHUKET	£ 114

CONDITIONS APPLY

For Emergency Travel Call: 07957 450 895 or 07796 174 376

HARROW & WEMBLEY 299 RAYNERS LANE, PINNER, HA5 5EG 0800 279 2211 / 020 8426 1266
CENTRAL LONDON 68 GREAT PORTLAND STREET, LONDON W1W 7NG 0800 043 1943 / 020 7636 7636
EAST LONDON & ESSEX 212 A, HIGH STREET NORTH, EASTHAM, LONDON E6 2JA 0800 279 1100 / 020 8586 7675
WEB: www.carltonleisure.com - EMAIL: info@carltonleisure.com

didates from any political party who engage in violence and election malpractices. "We also request the leaders of political parties to ensure that all those who work for their parties' success strictly adhere to the highest standards," the release added.

The release: "The National Christian Council for Sri Lanka calls on all the people of our country to act with wisdom and responsibility at the forthcoming General Election. It is vital that a free, fair and violent free election is held.

We note with concern the high incidence of violence already reported from various parts of the country and in particular the election-related political assassinations and attempted assassinations in the East.

We also note with concern that the elections will be held without the Constitution of the Elections Commission which was required to be set up under the seventeenth amendment to the Constitution. We have every confidence that the Commissioner of elections to implement fully and effectively the powers that he has at his disposal to ensure that the election is free, fair and violent free.

Civil Society leaders and the public must collaborate to ensure a free, fair and violence free election. This calls for vigilance, monitoring and prompt remedial action. The media, both State and private, must exercise its role with integrity, courage and impartiality to inform and educate the people. All must be free to vote for candidates and parties of their choice.

The people have a right to ask the political parties and other independent groups contesting the election to make their stance clear on the core issues facing the country.

The support of the people would depend on their commitment to a just and equitable position on them: Carrying forward the peace process and expanding the present ceasefire agreement to a negotiated permanent resolution of the substantive political issues that have caused the ethnic conflict.

We call upon all parties to declare openly their commitment to a negotiated political solution and their commitment to a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society that will treat all people with equality and dignity, addressing the issues of poverty and development in our country in terms of social and economic policies and programmes that seeks to bring dignity and to better the life of the rural and urban poor and the marginalized, a commitment to change the culture of corruption and violence that has unfortunately corroded our political and social life.

An indicator of this commitment would be whether the parties have denied nominations to candidates with a known record of corruption, thuggery and election malpractices, a commitment to human rights.

Again, a test of this commitment to pluralism is a willingness to allow the people to listen to opposing points of view and to make a free choice without intimidation and violence; a willingness to allow the freedom of expression and a freedom from fear.

We also make a special plea in the background of the ugly incidents of religious intolerance of the recent past: We appeal to the citizenry of our country to denounce such regressive measures and to vote for the protection of the freedom of religious worship and practice we have enjoyed thus far."

The release was signed by Rt. Rev. Kumara Illangasinghe - Chairperson - National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, Bishop of Kurunegala, Church of Ceylon; Rt. Rev. Duleep de Chickera - Bishop of Colombo, Church of Ceylon; Rt. Rev. Dr. S. Jebanesan - Bishop in Jaffna - Church of South India; Rev. Noel Fernando - President - Methodist Church Sri Lanka; Rev. W. Warshamanage, President - Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya; Colonel Dr. Brian Tuck - Territorial Commander - The Salvation Army; Rev. C. N. Jansz - President, Dutch Reformed

Church; Rev. George Stephen - Moderator -Presbytery of Lanka and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA); Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA); Student Christian Movement (SCM); Ceylon Bible Society and Christian Literature Society.

TNA to decide next government

"Tamils are in the verge of achieving their legitimate rights after several years of freedom struggle through the military might of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Hence it is the duty of Tamils to strengthen the hands of LTTE by sending at least twenty-one Tamil National Alliance parliamentarians thus making the TNA as a force to decide the future government," said Mr.R.Sampanthan, TNA leader and the TNA lead candidate for Trincomalee district when addressing a series of election meetings in the LTTE held area villages in Muttur east and Eachilampathu division on Sunday, 15 March, according to a report in the Tamilnet website.

Mr.Sampanthan further said "any government that comes to power after the April general election cannot not rule the country without providing an interim administration to the northeast province. The interim administration proposal to the northeast is not a new one. The then President Jayawardene proposed an interim administration with majority to LTTE representatives. The incumbent President Ms Chandrika Kumaratunge promised an interim administration to the northeast and hand it over to the LTTE for a period of ten years. Prime Minister Mr.Ranil Wickremasinghe also promised an interim administration during 2001 general election."

The forthcoming general election is a means for the Tamils to express their solidarity to the LTTE's Interim Self Governing Authority proposal that has been submitted to the government during the latter part of last year. The ISGA will serve as a vehicle to achieve a permanent solution to the Tamil national question, said Mr.Sampanthan.

Sangari goes it alone

Amidst a declaration by the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) General Secretary R. Sampanthan that the Tamil National Alliance's aim at the election is to prove to the international community that the LTTE is the sole representative of the Tamils, the party's President V. Anandasangari said that he would continue to fight for the rights of his community without being intimidated by any force.

Anandasangaree who has openly clashed with other TULF leaders like Mr Sambathan and Joseph Pararajasingham also charged that certain acts of several top TULFers had severely tarnished the image of the TULF.

But Mr. Anandasangari who is contesting the forthcoming elections heading an Independent Group of candidates, expressed his confidence that the people in the North would overcome anti-progressive elements and elect him as their representative. The TULF leader said that his political freedom and the democratic freedom of the people of the north had been endangered due to the politics of the Tamil National Alliance.

Mr. Anandasangaree also said that he was taking a big risk

by his decision to contest alone. "I am having problems even in connection to holding public meetings due to intimidation by 'certain' elements."

Candidates urged to declare assets

The Programme for the Protection of Public Resources (PPPR) has requested all the candidates, in the run-up to the April 2 General Election, to declare their assets and liabilities.

"We urge all the candidates to submit their declaration of assets and liabilities within the stipulated period. According to the Declaration of Assets and Liabilities Law, the candidates at a general election are required to declare their assets to the Commissioner of Election within a stipulated time. The DAL Law as amended by Acts no 29 of 1985 and No 74 of 1988 successful candidates should declare their assets between the date of nominations and the first sitting in the parliament and the unsuccessful candidates within three months from the date of nominations," a statement issued by the PPPR said yesterday.

The statement signed by Retd. SSP Tassie Senevirathna and Attorney at Law Charuka Samarasekera said that public are entitled to obtain certified copies of declarations of assets and liabilities from the Commissioner of Elections on the payment of a prescribed fee.

The declaration of assets and liabilities includes all the properties and beneficial interests of the declarant, and the spouse and unmarried children over 18 years or children dependent on the declarant. Further, the PPPR says that failure to make declarations or making a false statement in a declaration is a serious offense punishable with imprisonment.

Apart from requesting candidates to declare assets, the PPPR also requests public to be vigilant on the actual assets of the candidates and their declarations of assets and liabilities. "It should be noted that, the law presumes unexplained assets to have been accumulated by means of corruption," the statement added.

The Election Commissioner has already requested the candidates to send their declarations of their assets and liabilities, Commissioner told a delegation of the Joint Business Forum (JBIz) recently. The Commissioner has authority to request for such information to be declared to him within three months of the nominations being accepted.

At the last election, the Commissioner had received only one such declaration.

Canada provides support for free and fair elections

The Canadian High Commission to Sri Lanka announced yesterday that it will fund the activities of two leading local NGOs in support of free and fair elections in this country.

A contribution of Rs. 7,000,000 (US$ 71,500) will be divided equally between the centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) and the People's Action for Free and Fair Election (PAFFREL) to enable both organisations to monitor the April 2 national election.

High Commissioner, Valerie Raymond said, "Canada is pleased to support the important work of the CMEV and PAFFREL as these organisations seek to ensure that elections take place in a transparent and peaceful environment.

We call upon all parties to ensure that the elections are free from political violence. At this critical moment in Sri Lanka's history, it is essential that the will of the people determines the way forward," states a press release issued by the Canadian High Commission on Monday.

The contributions will be made through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI) which is one of the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) mechanism to respond quickly to local initiatives.

The contributions support these two election-monitoring organisations to deploy field-based monitors during the election campaign, on the day of election and after the release of election results.

The funding to CMEV will also support the documentation and reporting of cases of human rights violations and violence during the 2004 general and provincial council elections.

US gives $ 600,000 for election monitoring

US Ambassador to Sri Lanka Jeffrey J. Lunstead said that America would give US$ 600,000 assistance for election monitoring during the April election process. Addressing a news briefing at the US centre in Colombo, he said the US Agency for International Development (USAID) was giving nearly $ 600,000 to Sri Lankan election-monitoring organisations and to the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), a US based non-profit organisation working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide.

"Of this, approximately $ 400,000 will be given to the Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) and the People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL)", he said.

In announcing the grants, Lunstead said USAID has supported civil society development in Sri Lanka for decades. "The election assistance we are offering this year is part of over 10 years of support to domestic election monitoring organisations. The US Government believes that free and fair elections are critical for democracies.

We believe that Sri Lankan organisations do a good job in election monitoring and we want to help them continue to develop expertise in this area. Our goal is to strengthen the capacity of these organisations, in the broader context of sustainable development", he said. USAID works to improve democratic institutions and processes, promotes respect for human rights and enhance economic growth and financial stability through market-oriented reforms. USAID's election assistance will support pre-election activities, election-day observation and monitoring programs, and post-election strategies.

They will include to provide monitoring organisations with handbooks and other materials needed to promote uniform and high quality monitoring, strengthening, collection and reporting processes and providing key representatives of monitoring organisations training and technical assistance in their efforts to provide information to the media. ❐

NATHAN & CHELVA
SOLICITORS
We Work For Your Interest
Contact us for prompt & proper service in all Legal matters including Immigratiom & Conveyancing
Domestic & Commercial
Legal Aid Work also undertaken
Partners: K. Chelva-Nayagam LLB., T. Sri Pathma Nathan
169 TOOTING HIGH STREET, LONDON SW17 0SY
TEL: 0181-672 1800
FAX: 020-8672 0105

Revolt in the LTTE

The battle is joined, when will it begin?

Rex Benjamin

"It is Karuna that Sri Lanka's Minister of Defence, Thilak Marapona, and even Prabakaran have got to watch closely. Karuna may prove people wrong, people who believe that everything will end the day Prabakaran goes to 'heaven'. In fact Karuna is emerging as a formidable leader of the LTTE though he hails from the East. He could be even more ruthless than Prabakaran. Karuna may even tell Prabakaran one day: "I will look after the East and you look after the North."

- Bandula Jayasekara, Frontline, Jun. 22 - Jul. 5, 2002

"Karuna is a living example. He was the archetypal hero, the group's most publicised military champion. Yet the human substance was weak. He also proved himself the archetypal 'traitor'. In everyone in this society, the arch-hero and the arch-traitor cohabit the same human frame."

- UTHR Report, 8 March 2004

THE Tamil Tigers are confronted with the biggest ever internal revolt in its two-decade history with one of its most powerful commanders rebelling against the leadership.

Vinayagamoorthi Muralitharan, alias Colonel Karuna, who, as Special Commander, Batticaloa-Amparai, was in over-all charge of the LTTE's military operations in the eastern Sri Lanka, has rebelled and declared virtual unilaterel independence in what is seen as a 'grave challenge' to the LTTE leadership under its hitherto unchallenged and unquestioned supremo, Velupillai Pirapaharan.

The split in the LTTE has also thrown the now stalled peace process into even more jeopardy. With the rebel commander seeking a separate ceasefire between his group from the east and government, even the ceasefire agreement now in force for the last two years signed by the LTTE leader V Pirpaharan and Prime Minister Wickramasinghe is facing potential crisis.

Diplomats in Colombo voiced the view that failure to peacefully resolve the standoff between the Vanni-based leadership of the LTTE and its rebel-faction led by Col. Karuna based in Batticaloa could seriously undermine any prospects for the peace process being resurrected. International agencies including donor country representatives, foreign diplomats based in Colombo and NGOs involved in conflict resolution, peace, humanitarian and development work have hitherto found it easy to deal with one entity, and it seemed that whatever road they took it inexorably led only in one direction to the north to Kilinochchi where the LTTE's leadership held court. However, Karuna's defection and his continued territorial hold over the Batticaloa region will present problems for these foreign dignitaries if they are to seen as even handed.

Col. Karuna is also staking a claim for a seat at the negotiating table on behalf of his rebel faction, having previously sat at the negotiating table on behalf of the LTTE before it suspended participation in April 2003. He also wants a separate Interrim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) for the eastern region on the ground that the ISGA proposal now on the table as presented by the LTTE will perpetuate 'northern domination'. The LTTE's position has been that any peace talks must be between the Government of Sri Lanka and only the LTTE which it asserts is the 'sole representative' of the Tamils of the northeast. It is on this basis that the LTTE has resisted moves for a separate delegation to represent the island's Muslims attending and participating in the talks. Now Karuna's claim for separate representation is bound to create problems for the peace brokers in kick-starting the peace process again.

Though the Norwegians have officially suspended their role as facilitator in the peace process, Norwegian special envoy Erik Solheim is currently in Sri Lanka. Though he, along with Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattaskar, has visited Kilinochchi, Jaffna and Trincomalee having discussions with the LTTE leaders in the Vanni, he is on record as having announced that he would not meet with Karuna who has publicly expressed his wish to have direct negotiations with the Norwegians. Any move that would amount to giving recognition to the LTTE's rebel-faction by the Norwegians or other foreign dignitaries would be frowned upon by the LTTE leadership. However, questions have been raised by certain newspaper columnists as to what Mr Solheim is doing in Sri Lanka for over two weeks visiting the north having discussions at a time when the country is going through a election campaign when Norway has officially suspended its role as facilitator in the peace process.

There is the fear of the ceasefire breaking down arising from a fractious war breaking out between northern and eastern factions of the LTTE. However, particularly in the context of the forthcoming general election, and so long as Col Karuna is able to survive by retaining his present level of support, it is believed that LTTE leader Pirapaharan will not plunge into war again, and to that extent the Ceasefire Agreement may be secure for the time being.

The Norwegian headed Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has already declared that it will not deal with the rebel LTTE commander and undertake any monitoring duties in areas under his control. The rebel commander, while promising to adhere to the provisions of the current ceasefire agreement, sought his own separate ceasefire agreement with the Sri Lankan military. However, the government, at least up to now, has decided to adopt a stand-aloof stance treating the split in the LTTE as 'an internal matter'. However, if the government is interested in seeing that armed hostilities do not breakout again in the east, it may be compelled to consider at least an informal truce with LTTE's rebel commander.

Breaking News

Initially the northern based Tiger leadership from Kilinochchi sought to minimise the scale of the revolt saying

that the crisis in his organisation was "temporary" and that it would be "resolved soon".

Tamilnet website quoted the political head of the LTTE, S P Tamilselvan as telling the visiting Head of the Scandinavian-staffed Sri Lanka (Ceasefire) Monitoring Mission (SLMM), Maj.Gen.Trond Furuhovde, that the LTTE chief, that Velupillai Prabhakaran, was engaged in discussions on the matter with the leaders of the Batticaloa-Amparai area such as Special Commander Ramesh and Batticalao district political wing head, Kausalyan.

However Colonel Karuna went public announcing to the world media that he would no longer take orders from LTTE's northern leadership, while at the same time asserting obedience to the organisation's leader Velupillai Pirapaharan, who he said he had 'worshipped like a god'.

The first one to break the news of the revolt by the LTTE's much acclaimed Commander in the east on March 3 was Shimalee Senanayaka, a journalist of the *Associated Press*. In an interview with the journalist, Karuna was quoted as saying that he had broken ranks with the LTTE leadership and that there "was no question of reconciliation, everything has gone beyond reconciliation," adding that, "In future we will have a full self-administration (in the east). We'll receive no more command from the Vanni administration or Prabhakaran." He had sounded the Government about negotiating a separate cease-fire in the Eastern Province; his men would not begin fighting and would respect the current cease-fire until a new agreement was signed. "We think it's very important to have a separate defence pact with the security forces."

In a later interview to the Sinhala Service of the BBC, Col. Karuna said that he and his troops were ready to retaliate against Pirapaharan and his loyalists if he (Karuna) or his troops were ever harmed in any way. He said that he refused to send 1,000 more fighters to Vanni as requested by the LTTE leader because the eastern cadres had always been used at the front lines while the others led a luxurious life enjoying all comforts in the North.

He said while Pirpaharan's head of intelligence, Pottu Amman, was busy carrying out political assassinations in the East without his knowledge, he had to answer to the Norway-led Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission and the international community about the assassinations. Alleging that none of the economic benefits of the current ceasefire had benefited the Eastern Province, Karuna accused the LTTE leadership of buying luxury vehicles for their use out of international funds and of building a new town complex at Kilinochchi out of these funds while totally neglecting Batticaloa. He further alleged that the Norwegian and the Swiss money that reached Kilinochchi was never shared with the Eastern Province for the benefit of its people. He claimed that he had pointed out many of these issues in many letters written to Pirapaharan for which he did not receive any reply.

Karuna also pointed out that he had led many hard won battles and was, therefore, not afraid of his personal safety. If he or his troops were harmed, the LTTE leadership would be held responsible by the international community and that he would violently retaliate.

North vs East

Before daring to openly revolt against the leadership, Karuna is reported to have written a letter to Pirapaharan bitterly complaining of discrimination against LTTE cadres from the East by the leadership. He pointed out that 4,550 fighters from Batticaloa and Amparai had so far sacrificed their lives in the struggle for Tamil Eelam and 2,248 were serving in the North. Despite this, according to him, not a single cadre from these districts figured in a list of 30 divisional commanders recently appointed by Pirapaharan. In an undisguised reference to the opulent lifestyle of the Vanni leadership, the letter asked, "It is very painful that when all the heads of Tamil Eelam divisions and administrative heads tour Kilinochchi town in luxury vehicles, members of the Jeyanthan regiment from Batticaloa and Amparai remain on full time duty at the checkpoint in Palai. How can this be reasonable?"

Conveying his continued loyalty to the LTTE leader and seeking his permission to work independently under his direct leadership, Karuna further said in his letter, "We do not want to desert you. We look to you as our god. Sometimes this decision of ours can anger you. The reason is that I do not like to commit the historical mistake of not disclosing to you the hopes of the people and the fighters here and not respecting their feelings. If you believe in the people here and the fighters here allow us to work independently under your leadership."

'Thamil Alai', a local newspaper under Colonel Karuna's control published from eastern Sri Lanka also initially played down the seriousness of the conflict. It said on Thursday 4 March that the reports about a "split" in the LTTE were spread by people wanting to create "panic and fear" in the public mind and that the Batticalao-Amparai unit indeed was functioning with commitment to the LTTE's cause under the "command of our national leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and the guidance of Commander Col Karuna." It was also reported that Colonel Karuna had in a letter sent to the LTTE leader asked to act independently in the east but under the direct command of Mr Pirapaharan, and not under any other top level leaders of the LTTE.

In his letter to the LTTE leader, Col. Karuna had said, "If we are speaking about myself, up to now, on behalf of North Eelam people I have performed priceless duties risking my life. During times of these opportunities I am willing to serve the people of the South Tamil Eelam. My last will is to sacrifice my life at their feet. I do not like any body else standing in my way. I am willing to serve directly under you without divisional heads of Tamil Eelam. Hence I stopped the Intelligence Unit.

"We will not desert you and we need you still more. We treat you as our God. This decision may provoke you. Hence I plead with you to allow me to bring to your notice the feelings and the aspirations of the people and militants in this part. It is no crime on my part. That is why I am explaining, that if you trust the people and the militants in this part please allow us to serve you directly under your leadership without heads of divisions."

On the same day, the LTTE's Batticaloa and Amparai district Political Wing distributed a pamphlet which listed the grievances of the unit as well as the people of the Eastern districts vis-à-vis the predominantly northern leadership of the LTTE. It was noteworthy that it was the "Vanni Leadership" that was the target, not Pirpaharan himself directly, for the criticism.

Grievances

The one page pamphlet entitled "Batticaloa-Amparai Leadership Betrayed" was addressed to "Tamil speaking people". The fact that the eastern LTTE rebels had gone public with their grievances was seen by observers as an indication of the depth and scale of the conflict between the LTTE's eastern unit and its northern leadership.

The grievances listed in the pamphlet included:

1) Thousands of LTTE cadres from the Batticaloa-Amparai district have participated in the fighting in the North and laid down their lives, but their home district has continued to be in a state of great neglect without any development work.

2) "So far, 2,302 cadres from the district have died fighting in operations in the North and 2,248 have been killed in the East. Even now, more than 600 cadres from the district are engaged in sentry and security work in the forward lines and bunkers in the North. Cadres from the district are providing security to more than thirty top level functionaries of the LTTE enabling them to move about in their luxury vehicles without any fear."

3) "Our people are asking why, among the 30 top officials of the Tamil Eelam administration, there is none from the Batticaloa-Amparai district. Because of this our people doubt if they will get justice under the Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) which the LTTE is to set up in the North Eastern Province (NEP)."

4) "While other cadres are utilizing the current peace to acquire news skills, go home and meet their loved ones or go on pleasure trips abroad, why should our boys alone spend all their time in bunkers and sentry points?"

5) "In order to prepare for another war, the leadership in the Vanni had ordered the dispatch of thousands of fighting cadres from the Batticalao-Amparai district to the North. Parents from the district had voluntarily given their sons and daughters to the LTTE to safeguard their district. And it was to respect the assurances given to the parents and to use the cadres for development work in the district that the order to send the troops was not carried out,"

6) "The Intelligence unit under Pottu Amman has been responsible for the spate of murders and hijacking of vehicles in the district. Complaints about this to the leadership in the Vanni were of no avail. The intelligence units' cadres were in fact encouraged to indulge in these activities."

7) "Because of the differences between the district leadership and the leadership in the Vanni, attempts were made by the latter to foist charges on the former and punish them. It amounts to betrayal of a district leadership which had sacrificed lives and conducted brilliant military operations, some of which turning points in the history of the Tamil struggle, to safeguard the Tamil National Leadership."

Finally, the pamphlet said: "We appeal to our people to understand the malevolent actions of the Vanni leadership and conduct themselves accordingly."

Self determination

The whole basis of the LTTE's secessionist ideology and its armed rebellion against the Sri Lankan state is the discrimination and oppressive domination of the Tamils by the Sinhalese. Now ironically one of the top leaders of the LTTE, Karuna, is raising the spectre of discrimination and domination by the northern Tamil leadership of the LTTE against the eastern Tamils. In one sense, Karuna's break does not represent an ideological break – while Pirpaharan is standing for Tamil Eelam, Karuna is seeking Southern Tamil Eelam (Then Thamil Eelam) presenting himself as the defender of the east against northern Tamil domination.

In press interviews splashed across the world media, Karuna has said that he was seeking a separate politico-administrative structure and full self determination for the East. Though he has said so specifically, he has certainly placed the issue of the de-merger of the northern and eastern provinces on the agenda.

The 'grievances' listed by the Karuna's LTTE faction has been seen as representing a manifesto of the rebel leader to assert his claim for autonomy for the east from the northern dominated leadership of the LTTE under Pirapaharan who had remained the unchallenged leader of the organisation from its inception. In the past, very few have even attempted to question the LTTE supremo and those who had made any move to challenge Pirapaharan have not survived to tell the tale.

In one her many reports, Frances Harrison described Karuna as "the most endangered man in Sri Lanka" today.

Hero to Traitor

The Tiger leadership, shaken by the suddenness and the sheer audacity of Col Karuna's challenge have not only expelled him from the LTTE denouncing its one time champion military commander as a traitor, but also moved to take measures to isolate him from the rank and file LTTE cadres in the east, estimated to be in the region of five to six thousand.

The LTTE leadership's fear is that if Colonel Karuna is not isolated quickly and brought under heel there may be internecine fighting between the northern and the eastern forces of the Tamil Tigers. If this were to happen, then there is also the possibility the Sri Lankan military may willy-nilly get drawn into a conflict, and the temptation for the government forces to assist one side or the other would be huge.

In expelling Karuna, the LTTE in a statement issued at a press conference in Kilinochchi on 6 March said, "Mr. Karuna who was Commander, Batticaloa-Amparai, instigated by some malicious elements opposed to the Tamil Eelam liberation struggle, acting traitorously to the Tamil people and the Tamil Eelam National Leadership, has planned to secede himself from the liberation organization.

"The Commanders, Divisional Heads and cadres under him, unable to acquiesce with this traitorous act, have refused to comply with his orders and met with the National Leadership, explaining the ground reality prevailing there. In accordance with this, Karuna has been discharged from the Liberation Tigers organization and relieved of his responsibilities.

"The Tamil Eelam National Leadership has appointed Mr. Ramesh as Special Commander, Mr. Ram as Commander, Mr. Piraba as Deputy Commander and Mr. Kausalyan as Political Head of the Batticaloa-Amparai District. It is hereby informed that these officials will assume their positions and functions as the official representatives of our organization."

Even as the announcement of the expulsion of Karuna

was being made, there were reports that Prirpaharan had ordered that about 500 cadres from the Eastern Province working in Kilinochchi, whose loyalty to the Tiger leader was suspect, should be disarmed and placed under house-arrest. It has been reported that Karuna had earlier asked his cadres from the east belonging to the Jayanthan Brigade engaged in frontline and security duties to move out of their positions and surrender to the Sri Lankan army who were expected to transfer them to the east.

The LTTE also sought to downplay the strength and the hold of the rebel Colonel over LTTE cadres in the east. A LTTE spokesman was also quoted as saying, "This is a problem with an individual. All eastern commanders have expressed their allegiance to the movement except Karuna. We have no problem with the control of cadres in Batticaloa and Amparai." However, all indications were that the eastern region was firmly under Karuna's control and the new officials appointed by the Vanni leadership - Mr. Ramesh as Special Commander, Mr. Ram as Commander, Mr. Piraba as Deputy Commander and Mr. Kausalyan as Political Head of the Batticaloa-Amparai District - have so far not been able move to the east to take up their positions.

Dismissing the report about his expulsion from the LTTE, Karuna is reported have that said it was a ridiculous move because five days earlier he had informed the Vanni leadership that he would no longer be taking orders from them and would be operating independently.

Even as Thamilselvan was trying downplay the seriousness of Karuna's challenge, reports emerged that Karuna had already replaced some key officials of the LTTE in the Eastern Province with his own trusted nominees. These included the appointment of Karikalan as the Batticaloa-Amparai Political Wing Leader in the place of Kausalyan; the replacement of Ramesh, Karuna's deputy military commander, by Rabat; and of Pirabha, in charge of administration, by Thurai.

It also emerged that Karuna ordered the dismissal of about 60 policemen from the North posted in the Eastern Province and ordered them to leave the area and banned the entry of any officials of the LTTE's intelligence wing headed by Pottu Amman into the Eastern Province. Reportedly he also ordered the detention of recruits from the North, who had come to the East for undergoing military training, and the closure of all offices of the LTTE in the Eastern Province.

Karikalan, one time LTTE's Special Political Commissar for Batticaloa and Amparai, was brought back from disgrace by Karuna and appointed Batticaloa-Amparai Political Wing Leader in the place of Kausalyan. Later reports, however, indicated that Kausalyan, Ramesh and Pirabha with their family had fled to the Vanni, followed Karikalan, many more political, military and intelligence wing cadres, including doctors, photographers, video cameramen, auditors among the lot.

Army chief 'stunned'

It was when he came to know that the sacked Ramesh, Kausalyan and Pirabha with their family members and with some others were fleeing to the Vanni that Karuna made contact with the Sri Lankan military with a view to prevent their escape. It is learnt that Varathan, Secretary to Karuna had telephoned the Sri Lanka Army Chief Lt. Gen. Balagalle to request the army to prevent the three 'defectors' from escaping into the Vanni, capture and return them to Karuna.

It is said that the Army Chief was 'stunned' when he heard about Karuna's revolt against the leadership. To make sure that it was 'real', the Army Chief personnaly spoke to Karuna himself who made a further request to the effect that he wanted a separate ceasefire and defence agreement with the government. Karuna was politely told that in view of the prevailing ceasefire agreement between the government and the LTTE, the military could not prevent the 'defectors' from crossing into the Vanni. As for the separate ceasefire agreement, Karuna was asked to put his request in writing. Within an hour a written request for a separate ceasefire agreement reached the Army Chief, and it was signed by none other than the newly appointed Political Wing leader in Batticaloa, Karikalan, who later fled to the Vanni professing loyalty to Pirapaharan and denouncing Karuna.

The authorities in Colombo and army top brass were 'shocked' when they came to know about Karuna's revolt against the LTTE leadership. The President and Prime Minister were kept informed about the unfolding developments on the eastern front. Cyril Herath, the Defence Secretary, was to confirm later (on March 5) that Karuna had in fact made the request for a separate defence pact with the security forces and a fresh ceasefire accord, and that the request had been made through government military commanders, but the military chiefs were against entering into negotiations with a faction of the LTTE. "We could not agree to such a request. When there is one ceasefire agreement signed between the Prime Minister and Pirapaharan, how can we have another with a member of one of the parties?" Herath said adding, "Both sides have indicated that they will abide by the ceasefire that is currently in place. In this situation we don't want to do anything that will complicate matters. But we hope they will not fight each other."

Military officials in the east said that Karuna made it clear that he would hold his fire, but was not willing to recognise the ceasefire agreement between the government and his former boss, LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Bishop's attempt

The attempt by Bishop of Batticaloa Rt. Rev. Kingsley Swamipillai, who led a delegation to meet the LTTE representatives in Kilinochchi with the intention of a avoiding another bloodbath in the eastern Sri Lanka proved abortive.

The Bishop and his team from Batticaloa consisting of the eastern university representatives, NGOs and members of the business community, met with LTTE's political head S. P. Thamilselvan, Batticaloa-Amparai LTTE 'Special Commander' Ramesh, 'Commander' Ram, the Political Head of Batticaloa-Amparai Kausalyan and Karikalan on Monday (8 March) in Kilinochchi.

"We want to avoid another war. We must motivate people for peace, not for war," Bishop Swamipillai said. The volatile process of peace must be cemented by urging people to solve disputes through the means of discussion, he said.

Reporting the meeting the LTTE's Tamilnet website said that Thamilselvan and the Batticaloa-Amparai LTTE leaders had explained to the visitors the circumstances that led to the leaderships' expulsion of Karuna from the organisation, and

had assured the delegation that their actions to restore normalcy would not in anyway affect the people or the LTTE cadres in the Batticaloa-Amparai Districts.

It appears that at the request of the Baticaloa delegation, a conditional amnesty was offered to Karuna, but it is not known what conditions the LTTE leadership had imposed. It is speculated that the conditions included that the rebel commander should withdraw the allegations he had made against the LTTE leadership, he should step down from his self-proclaimed positions, he should henceforth desist from taking part in any political activities and he should go into voluntarily exile to join his family in Malaysia. But, his spokesman, Varathan, dismissed the offer and said that Karuna was commanding fighters in two eastern districts and would not step down despite the amnesty offer made through the Bishop of Batticaloa. "It is ridiculous," Varathan told joumalists. "It is they who should think of being forgiven by our people for the sacrifices made to protect the land and the people of Vanni."

However Karuna was willing to work with Pirapaharan to avoid bloodshed among the rebels. "It would be only a friendly partnership. We would not go under his administration." That too on condition that Pirapaharan sacked his intelligence chief Pottu Amman, his police chief Nadesan and his finance chief Thamileandi.

Replying to a suggestion that he might become a target of of the LTTE for assassination, Karuna said, "No, death is the furthest thing from my mind. I've been in the LTTE for 20 years and I know how it works."

An AFP reported (12 March) reported that the rival Tamil Tiger factions had deployed fighters on the banks of a river in eastern Sri Lanka as the LTTE leadership in the Vanni vowed to bring back the Batticaloa and Amparai districts under its own control. The LTTE's political wing leader of eastern Trincomalee, S. Thilak, is reported to have said the group's fighters were poised against the breakaway faction of Col. Karuna. "Both sides have their cadres camping on the two banks of the Verugal river that marks the district border." But Thilak said there had been no fighting between the two groups, who according to the military were within small-arms range of each other. It was also reported that the LTTE had urged all its Wanni cadres to return immediately to Kilinochchi from Batticaloa and Amparai districts. This action was seen as a move to ensure that the Wanni cadres did not become hostages in Karuna's hands in the event fighting broke out between the two rival factions.

Col. Karuna also set about dismantling and shutting down LTTE structures such as "Police Stations", "Law Courts" and other organisations reportedly manned mainly by LTTE's northern personnel whose loyalty he suspected.

Meanwhile the LTTE vowed to retake areas under the control of LTTE's rebel commander Col. Karuna, but said it would try to do so without bloodshed to avoid destabilising the ceasefire.

In an interview with the Tamilnet wbsite, S. P. Thamilselvan, leader of the Tigers' political wing, said, "By rejecting to abide by our movement's ruling he is pushing himself into a dangerous corner. "However, cognizant of the prevailing peace, our leadership is taking careful steps to bring the Batticaloa-Ampara area back into control without any bloodshed or danger to our cadres." Referring to the discussions he had with the Norwegian special envoy, Eris Solheim on the Batticaloa situation, he said, "Even before the meeting the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission and Norway had taken some clear, and in our view appropriate, decisions. They have discontinued any communications with Mr. Karuna and to anyone in his area, and have also taken steps to avoid future contacts. They are already operating in a way that is consistent with our thinking and have demonstrated a clear understanding of the undercurrents of the crisis."

"Mr. Karuna not only has been relieved of his responsibilities, he has been removed from the movement as well. He is now a single individual accused of several violations against the movement's code of conduct. By rejecting to abide by the movement's ruling he is pushing himself into a dangerous corner. However, cognizant of the prevailing peace, our leadership is taking careful steps to bring the Batticaloa-Amparai area back into control without any bloodshed or danger to our cadres. Cadres under Mr. Karuna's command are distancing and deserting him gradually. Mr. Karuna is increasingly facing danger from among his own group of cadres," Thamilselvan claimed.

Hunger strike

A report (12 March) from eastern Batticaloa datelined said that hundreds of residents and school children of Batticaloa, organised by an organisation called South Thamil Eelam, commenced a hunger strike at a Hindu temple in Batticaloa demanding the LTTE leader Pirapaharan to revoke his decision of expelling its eastern province leader, Col. Karuna from the LTTE.

No doubt the so-called hunger-strike was being orchestrated by Karuna's men. The hunger strikers warned that unless the LTTE leader granted their demands within next three days, they would commence a fast-unto-death campaign. The hunger strike action was started at 9 a.m. yesterday in Mamangeswaram Temple, Amirthakali. A spokesman of the South Tamil Eelam said that a letter had been addressed to Mr Pirapaharan stating: "We, the people of Batticaloa-Ampara strongly oppose the decision of our leader Pirapaharan and request him to change the decision. We are deeply shocked to learn that our Commander Colonel Karuna Amman has been dismissed from his office and from the LTTE organisation."

The letter added: "Respecting our feelings and the sacrifices made by our people and soldiers of East, we request you to reconsider your decision and without causing a division amongst us to help us work unitedily for the dawn of Tamil Eelam."

The hunger strikers demanded from the LTTE leader: "Take back the allegation of traitor imposed on Colonel Karuna Amman; our father Colonel Karuna Amman is not a single man. He is the only one worthy of being our commander; we request that South Eelam be organised under the leadership of Pirapaharan and under the guidance of Karuna; the Tamil Eelam Army must work for the dawn of Tamil Eelam without engaging in conflict among themselves and soldiers of Batticaloa-Ampara should be returned to Batticaloa safely."

In the Batticaloa district, those loyal to Col. Karuna burnt down the houses of Ramesh and Kaushalyan who had with

their families had fled to the Vanni.. They also arranged public protests in Tirukovil, Chenkalady, Kalmunai, Kiran, Valachenai, Palukamam and Poratuvu at which the effigies of Pirapaharan and Pottu Amman were burnt.

Allegations against Karuna

While it seems obvious that there may have been long-standing differences between the northern and eastern wings in the LTTE leadership, it is not clear as to the exact immediate cause that precipitated Karuna to mount this unprecedented rebellion at this time.

One reason given in justification of Karuna's revolt was his anger over the operations of Pottu Amman, the chief of the LTTE's intelligence wing, in the East without Karuna's knowledge. Some informed sources have expressed the view that Karuna made the pre-emptive move to bring the conflict into the open having come to know of certain moves by the Vanni leadership to remove Karuna from the powerful position he held in the east and thereafter put him on 'trial'.

In the past few days, the LTTE has begun a propaganda counter-strike by releasing information through chosen journalists and reporters about Karuna's alleged financial skulduggery and even sexual misconduct. A campaign of vilification of has begun to undermine Karuna.

Among the bits of dirt that have been dished out against Karuna include accusations of building a house at Aayithiyamalai from LTTE funds, and misappropriating LTTE funds when building the 'Thenagam' complex at Karadianaaru and 'Meenagam' complex at Tharavai in the eastern Sri Lanka.

He is also being accused of having had an illicit affair with a senior women's brigade leader 'N' of the LTTE, and it is alleged that she was taken to Colombo for carrying out an abortion. It has also been alleged Ranjan, the driver of the vehicle in which she travelled to Colombo was later found murdered to silence him. It was made to look as if he had suffered a heart attack. Another rumour being circulated after Karuna's rebellion is that Karuna's wife Nira and their three children have gone abroad to Malaysia with took two suitcases full of money is another piece of rumour that has been allowed to circulate.

It is alleged that Karuna has been shrewdly opportunistic and calculating in raising the regional issue - domination by the Jaffna-centric northern leadership - of discrimination and step-motherly treatment of what he describes as 'Then Thamil Eelam' (Southern Tamil Eelam) comprising the Batticaloa-Amparai districts in eastern Sri Lanka. It is also alleged that Karuna is seeking to cover up the real problems he is facing within the LTTE by raising the regional card and shifting the focus on his personal disputes with the Tiger intelligence chief Pottu Amman.

Contrary to what Karuna has been alleging in recent days, it is said that Karuna and the Batticaloa-Amparai unit of the LTTE enjoyed a level of autonomy tantamount to independence within the LTTE. "Karuna was the only regional commander who was allowed to start his own daily, Thamil Alai, and printing press - parallel to the Eelanatham in the Vanni. Prabhakaran had even granted him a degree of freedom for procuring weapons from abroad. The Tiger leader had never entrusted any other commander with so much power in the LTTE's history. The LTTE's administrative structure in Batticaloa was so unique that it was the only regional command ever to be granted the right to carry out its own covert operations in Colombo through its special military intelligence wing. The Batticaloa military intelligence wing of the LTTE was a semi-autonomous entity that functioned directly and under the sole command of Karuna. It was the only unit in the LTTE other than Pottu Amman's national intelligence division to independently plan and carry out strikes outside the northeast.

All this was considered a mixture of implicit trust and gratitude that Prabhaharan had in Karuna....

"As the only commander in the LTTE who had been allowed to hold his position for 17 long years, and particularly after he was vested with unparalleled autonomous powers in 2002, Karuna got used to the idea of running the region as its sole military/political authority."*(Taraki, Daily Mirror, 17 March 2004*)

It is learnt that during the past year, a combined investigating operation into the management and functioning of the Batticaloa-Amparai unit of the LTTE under the command of Karuna was mounted by the intelligence wing, police service and finance division of the LTTE.

It is said that Karuna was infuriated when he came to know about the investigation and demanded from the LTTE leader Pirapaharan to stop it without success.

The reason for Karuna demanding the removal of Pottu Amman, Nadesan, and Thamilendhi who headed the three wings is that they were all involved in this combined investigation against Karuna. It is also said that despite repeated orders that Karuna should go to the Vanni, he refused to comply for he was extremely suspicious that he would be arrested and detained in custody for the purposes of the investigation.

According to Taraki, there was one incident that precipitated the LTTE split at this time. According to him, The LTTE's Finance Division (FD) have been giving Karuna's administration 10-12 million rupees a month to supplement the funds it generated from Batticaloa.

In 2002, the (FD) of the LTTE appointed the one-armed Humson to regulate, centralise and manage all the finances of the Batticaloa-Amparai region. A finance intelligence unit was also established under Humson. Three months after the arrival of the audit from Vanni, Humson was reported missing. It was rumoured in the areas-controlled by the Tigers that he had run away with more than 50 million rupees from the LTTE's coffers in Batticaloa. The story gained further credence when Humson's relatives and associates were threatened and questioned by Karuna's men. Some of them were beaten up mercilessly. Later it was said that Humson had surrendered to the Tigers in the Vanni. The fact, however, was that he had gone to the north without informing Karuna and had reported to his headquarters that the eastern commander could not account for more than fifty million rupees of LTTE funds in Batticaloa. The Humson episode triggered the events that led to the split.

Counter-strike

In its counter-strike against Karuna, LTTE has deployed the LTTE's one-time strong man of Batticalo, and who had remained a confidant of Karuna until the split. When he broke ranks with the LTTE leadership, Karuna appointed Mr. Sivagnanam Karikalan, one of LTTE's senior leaders in the East, as his Political wing leader. Having fled to the Vanni professing loyalty to Pirapaharan Karikalan has denounced his erstwhile chief in Batticaloa. He told the press on 7 March, "Karuna will be seen as a Pol Pot if he continues to act irresponsibly towards

our people." Charging that there were outside elements behind Karuna's decision to act 'traitorously', he said, "We believe there are external forces behind his confused state of mind and that is why he did not listen to any of our advice. The truth of who these forces are will be evident soon."

"Karuna's decision to betray us was a decision that he took on his own without consulting any of his colleagues and senior staff. He is trying to compel commanders and heads of divisions in the Batticaloa-Ampara district to accept his decision. He won't succeed. Today none of the people in the Batticaloa-Amapara district are prepared to reject our national leader. I want to reiterate this point. Even at the recent Pongu Thamil festival in Batticaloa, thousands of our people carried photos of our national leader with the slogan "Tamils are Tigers. Tigers are Tamils"expressing their commitment to the Tamil national cause and to our national leadership," the Tamilnet website quoted Mr. Karikalan as saying.

He also said that Karuna was spreading false stories to the international media to justify his betrayal and to prevent the international Tamil community from calling Mr. Karuna a "traitor," and that the Tamil people of Batticaloa-Ampara would in short time remove the blot that Mr. Karuna's betrayal has left on them, and prove their loyalty to the Tamil national leadership.

Inviting Karuna to give up his rebellion, Karikalan said, "Our liberation movement is a great force, based on the contributions of a large number of people and fighters. It is not dependent on a single political head or commander. Even today, our national leader is ready to pardon Mr. Karuna, and assure the security of his person. If Karuna wants [reconciliation or pardon], our national leader will ensure no harm falls on Mr. Karuna and let him live in freedom. We want to inform through the international Tamil community and the media that Mr. Karuna can trust us. Our national leader has personally granted us an assurance that he is ready to pardon."

Embezzling funds

Karikalan also accused his former commander of defecting to avoid disciplinary action on charges of embezzling LTTE funds and other acts of misconduct. According to the Tamilnet website, Karikalan in an interview with the Australian Tamil Broadcasting Corporation (ATBC) on Friday, 12 March disclosed that the Batticaloa crisis was precipitated when LTTE leadership summoned Karuna to the Vanni after discovering financial irregularities and receiving allegations of questionable conduct. Fearing disciplinary action Karuna defied Vanni command and took unilateral action to split.

Saying that Karuna was one of the most trusted commanders and held in high esteem by leader Pirapaharan, Karikalan said, "Only recently Karuna started complaining about the step-motherly treatment the Batticaloa-Amparai region was receiving from Vanni leadership. He seemed to have already taken a decision to split when we realized that Karuna was taking actions that are inimical to the movement.

"Under the pretext of sending some of us for training, he used that space to make changes to the command hierarchy under him. He took control of finances, the meals section and appointed people loyal to him in key military positions. During this period a fighter discovered Karuna embezzling huge amounts of movement's funds. Although Karuna tried to discipline the fighter, he managed to escape to Vanni and informed the leadership of Karuna's financial improprieties. Karuna's driver, who also knew of the misuse of funds, died a week later. Although fever was claimed as the cause of his death, Batticaloa-Amparai commanders were shocked to learn later that he was poisoned.

"Karuna was further embarrassed by public knowledge of allegations related to his improper conduct. When the leadership in Vanni became aware of these violations, leader Pirapaharan summoned him to Vanni. Karuna, fearing reprimand and possible disciplinary action refused to go; instead he asked for an emissary be sent from Vanni to see him.

"Also Karuna sent his wife and children to Malaysia recently and told his commanders that LTTE leader was aware of where his family was and that he [Karuna] would not do anything without the leader's knowledge. We now realize the reason behind this planned move by Karuna.

"Karuna through his foreign visits had the opportunity to come into contact with foreign forces keen on subverting the Tamil National struggle. Through introductions to Karuna these elements had the means to assess the unique position Karuna had in the movement and military strength under his command. It is highly probable that these external forces, exploiting his selfish motives, bought him over," said Karikalan.

In a later speech made by Karikalan at the University of Jaffna, Karikalan was reported have identified the United States as the "external forces" involved in plotting the split in the LTTE. The accusation against the US found reflection in a flurry of comments in the Colombo media which in turn provoked an angry rejection of the allegation by the US embassy in Colombo.

Usually it is India's Research and Intelligence Wing (RAW) that becomes the whipping target of Tamil Tigers for any trouble that befalls the LTTE, but this time round it is the United States that has been mentioned. However, among expatriate Tamil Tiger circles the propaganda that is disseminated widely is that India is the villain behind the present split in the LTTE.

Questions

The nature and extent of the allegations made against Karuna, if true, represent a massive fraud and gross misappropriation of vast sums of money on a monumental scale. The allegations, if true, of using female cadres for sexual pleasure and murder of cadres to hide the truth from coming out are shocking indeed. While these allegations now coming out into the open may serve the purpose of undermining the reputation and integrity of the once acclaimed military of champion of the LTTE, they raise important questions relating to the probity, accountability and deployment of the vast resources that have been mobilised by the LTTE from the Tamil people who had no choice but to give without question.

What has happened to the self-proclaimed image of incorruptibility, iron discipline and probity of character at all levels in the LTTE? If Karuna is guilty of committing offences that Karikalan is now alleging, what was the LTTE leadership and Karikalan himself doing all these years? In a regimented and tight organisation such as the LTTE, is it possible for a single man, however highly placed he may be, to swindle tens and tens of million rupees, build residential mansions for his and relatives' use, or setup and invest in commercial enterprises without anyone else in the organisation knowing? Or are there others also who are complicit in committing the offences that Karuna is alleged to have committed? Why is it that these charges are being levelled against him only after he broke

ranks from the LTTE? Or are they all trumped up charges to crucify Karuna now that he has rebelled? These are questions that the LTTE leadership cannot duck.

The significance

The full significance of this showdown between the unquestioned leader from the north and the eastern rebel commander is yet to unfold. The withdrawal of the amnesty offered to Karuna signals that decisions which may lead to violent consequences have already been taken by the Vanni leadership. Many ordinary people in eastern Sri Lanka are gripped by uncertainty as to what is going to happen in the coming days and by fear of possible violent clashes between the LTTE and Karuna's faction.

There are those who hold the view it will be LTTE's avowed intention to re-impose its military hegemony in the east. A bloodbath seems much in prospect. To those who are prepared to accept the claim of the LTTE as the 'sole representative' of the Tamils, LTTE regaining its pre-existing position in the east even through a bloodbath seems a price worth paying. But to those civilians, not only Tamils, but also Muslims and Sinhalese, living in the east, who have gone through the horrors of war over the years and enjoyed a period of respite after the ceasefire came into effect two years ago, such a prospect is nightmarish.

It will leave in its wake tremendous loss of life and in the long run deeper and more lasting scars and divisions between the people of the north and east.

For the TNA

For the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) the split in the LTTE could not have happened at a worse time. The TNA, comprising four Tamil political parties, has thrown its lot with the LTTE on whose behalf it is contesting the forthcoming parliamentary election to demonstrate and secure an electoral mandate for the LTTE to assert its claim of being the 'authentic and sole representative' of the Tamil people. It also had hoped to win at least 21 seats in the next parliament thereby being able to be 'king-makers' in the formation of the next Government of Sri Lanka.

The election campaign of the TNA was left in total disarray in the wake of the LTTE split. The TNA contingent of candidates in the eastern province did not know what to do - whether to fall in line with Karuna or not. Some of them were old hands of the TULF and others were handpicked by Karuna himself on behalf of the LTTE before the split. Many of them unable to resist the pressure were seen participating in demonstrations orchestrated by the Karuna faction at which the effigies of Pirapaharan and Pottu Amman were set alight. Others thought it was wiser to keep their mouth shut. In the north, which includes Jaffna, Mannar, Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu, after days of dithering, the campaign on behalf the TNA has restarted with full vigour, the LTTE cadre playing a leading role. The non-LTTE political parties contesting these areas have complained of generalised intimidation and disruption of their campaigns by LTTE elements.

In any event, TNA candidates who get elected at the April 2 election will be confronted with the problem of choosing as to which faction of the LTTE they are going to pay allegiance to.

For the LTTE

For the LTTE, Karuna's mutiny represents a split both at the leadership level and in its ranks. It also represents a rupture in its military hegemony it has been able to impose over the Northeast. Whether this rupture is temporary or terminal is yet to be seen. With the formidable military machine at its disposal, the LTTE will no doubt seek to re-impose its total hegemony. But it will plan and plot to strike at the right time. If as it is claimed that Karuna is 'alone' deserted by his immediate lieutenants and with dwindling support, what is holding Pirapaharan from mounting a frontal assault now, one may ask. There are three factors that constrain him from making any immediate major military move.

First, certainly the LTTE leader is aware of Karuna's acknowledged military prowess and of the substantial strength of forces under his command with which Karuna is likely to offer stiff resistance resulting in heavy casualties on both sides.

Secondly, there is the forthcoming general election on April 2 at which the LTTE is seeking to achieve its political project through the Tamil National Alliance by securing an electoral mandate by winning the overwhelming majority of seats in the Northeast in support of its claim of being the 'sole representative' of the Tamil people. Any major military operation at this crucial time might jeopardise that project.

Third, the current Ceasefire Agreement prohibits any 'offensive military operations' and hence if the LTTE were to mount a major military campaign to subdue its eastern upstart, it will represent a violation of the Ceasefire Agreement, and the international community is unlikely to condone such a brazen violation.

However, breaking ceasefires and poking the proverbial two-fingers at the international community will not be a new experience for the LTTE. It is therefore probable that once the elections are over, having adequately prepared militarily, Pirpaharan will order a military operation against Karuna justifying the action as an "internal organisational matter" in respect of which the Ceasefire Agreement has no application.

For Col. Karuna

For Karuna, now it is a case of survival against the formidable forces and resources of the LTTE, which means he has hold on to his territory and camps and retain the support and loyalty of the thousands of cadres under his command. Up to now, he remains cocky and confident about retaining the loyalty of his cadres estimated to be in the region of five to six thousand.

However, it has to be noted that many of the senior political and military leaders who had worked under his command in the Batticalo-Amparai unit have abandoned him and fled to the Vanni with their families swearing allegiance to Pirapaharan. It is LTTE's former strongman in the east, Sivagnanam Karikalan, who was appointed by Karuna as his top political commissar after he declared his mutiny, who is now being deployed by the Vanni leadership to undermine Karuna's personal reputation and integrity with serious allegations of financial skulduggery and other acts of gross misconduct. Such allegations widely circulated locally and internationally are certain to raise doubts in the minds of Karuna's own adherents about the genuineness of his complaints against the Vanni leadership.

Even though he may in numerical terms have thousands of cadres under his command, how many of these will remain loyal to him when the chips are down and the inevitable battles begin is another question. More importantly, how many among them are qualitatively competent in terms of training and experience in facing and fighting the crack cadres who

refugee action

Options

North of England REFUGEE SERVICE

Are you an asylum seeker or refugee who is considering returning home ?

If you are thinking about returning to your home country, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) can help you return and establish your livelihood. IOM is an independent organisation working with migrants worldwide. Further information is available from IOM and our partners around the country - 'Choices' at Refugee Action, 'Options' at YMCA Glasgow and NERS (North of England Refugee Service) in the north east of England.

Choices, Options and NERS offer local information, advice and support to asylum seekers and refugees who are considering return home or are exploring options to stay in the UK. This independent, confidential service can help you to make an informed decision whether to stay in the UK or return home.

If you decide you would like to return home, IOM can help you through the 'Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme' (VARRP). This programme assists asylum seekers of all nationalities and has been running since 1998. IOM will:

- help you get the travel documents you will need
- arrange the flight to your home country
- meet you at the airport and help you with departure and arrival formalities
- assist with domestic transportation to your final destination
- offer reintegration support to establish your livelihood at home

Reintegration assistance is offered in your home country. It can cover vocational training courses, setting up a small business or access to education. Assistance is provided through IOM offices worldwide, and varies from country to country.

Contact IOM from anywhere in the UK for more information on how to apply to return home. Translated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and application forms are available on the website www.iomlondon.org

IOM London: Tel: 020 7233 0001 or Free phone 0800 783 2332 Fax: 020 7233 3001 e-mail: varrp@iomlondon.org
or come to the office at 21 Westminster Palace Gardens, Artillery Row, London SW1P 1RR
(near St James's Park tube and Victoria station).

Contact Choices if you are in England or Wales and you are interested in exploring your options about staying in the UK or returning home. More information is available on the website www.refugee-action.org.uk

London office:	**Manchester office**:	**Leeds office**:	**Leicester office**:
3rd Floor, The Old Fire Station 150 Waterloo Road London SE1 8SB Tel: 020 7654 7700 Fax: 020 7401 3699	1 Tariff Street Manchester M1 2HF Tel: 0161 233 1200 or 0800 917 2719 (free from a landline) Fax: 0161 236 4285	Suite 7, Floor C, Josephs Well Hanover Walk Leeds LS3 1AB Tel: 0113 244 5345 Fax: 0113 243 5448	Muslim Community Resource Centre, Melbourne Centre, Melbourne Road Leicester LE2 0GU Tel: 0116 261 4846 Fax: 0116 251 1712

Contact NERS if you are in North East England and are interested in exploring your options about staying in the UK or returning home. More information is also available on the website www.refugee.org.uk

NERS: 3rd Floor, Forum House, The Forum, Wallsend High St, Tyne & Wear NE28 8LX
Tel: 0191 200 1199/1108 Fax: 0191 200 5929 e-mail: wallsend@refugee.org.uk

Contact Options if you are in Scotland and you are interested in exploring your options about staying in Scotland or returning home. More information is also available on the website www.ymcaglasgow.org

Options at YMCA Glasgow: 33 Petershill Drive, Glasgow G21 4QQ
Tel: 0141 557 2355 Fax: 0141 557 0874 e-mail: options@ymcaglasgow.org

IOM International Organization for Migration

This Programme is co-financed

will be deployed by Pirpaharan.

Then there is the more important question whether Karuna has at his disposal sufficient financial resources to continue to sustain his political and military structures and the thousands of cadres under his command. The Vanni leadership controls all of LTTE's finances and has been subsidising its eastern unit with millions of rupees every month. Though the eastern unit also has had its own structures to generate its own funds through the collecting taxes and extorting monies, an all out coercive drive on the part of Karuna to raise funds among the people to meet the shortfall will make him very unpopular. Unpopularity among the eastern people purportedly on whose behalf Karuna raised the flag of revolt is the last thing that he can afford at the present time.

Karuna cannot even dream of matching the massive multinational network of resources at the disposal of the LTTE leadership - commercial, shipping, arms procurement, satelite/TV/radio propaganda network. It is already clear since Karuna's rebellion that the much influential pro-LTTE international Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, which without doubt is predominantly Jaffna-centric, has thrown its weight behind the Vanni leadership denouncing Karuna as a 'traitor' who has betrayed the cause of Tamil Eelam. Not much support for Karuna will come from this quarter.

For the others

To the non-LTTE Tamil parties like the EPDP and the EPRL (Varathar Faction) and some other un-aligned Tamil groups, the split in the LTTE is seen as a welcome development. Not that they love Karuna more and Pirapaharan less. It is because they and their members have been for years at the receiving end of the LTTE's sustained campaign annihilation for years. They entertain the belief that the monolith of the LTTE has been cracked wide open and think that Karuna's rebellion heralds the beginning of the end of the Tamil Tiger hegemony over the Tamil people and the Northeast.

These groups entertain the hope and wish that the split will result in the opening up of space and opportunities for them to function and for voices of dissent to be expressed and heard. Whether this hope and wish will materialise into reality or turn out to be delusion will depend on the capacity for survival on the part of Karuna. In the ultimate analysis, if past experience is to go by, it will be Pirapaharan who will want have the final say.

There is some substance in the cliché that extremist ultra Sinhala nationalism gave birth to Pirpaharan the Tamil warrior, who in turn gave birth to Karuna the rebel.

Battle joined

Karuna is no ordinary military functionary in the LTTE. He has been its champion military commander par excellence and ranked above all others and only second to Pirapaharan who had publicly acknowledged the significant contribution made by Karuna in many of LTTE's major military battles. During the April 2002 April press conference attended by hundreds of international journalists, when he was asked about his most memorable military successes, Pirapaharan referred to Karuna as his best military commander, and said that the campaigns that Karuna commanded and waged were among the most successful in the LTTE's long history of armed struggle against Sri Lankan government forces. The LTTE has not only lost such an acclaimed military commander. He has turned against the LTTE leadership and thrown the gauntlet. By withdrawing the 'amnesty' offered to the mutinous Karuna, Pirpaharan has picked up the gauntlet signalling that the battle has been joined. The only question that remains is: when will it begin? ❐

Tamil TIMES

Annual Subscription Rates

UK/India/Sri Lanka: £ 15.00/US$25.00

Australia: Aus.$45.00 (Cheques On Australia Based Banks only)

Canada: Can$ 40.00. All other Countries: £20.00/US$35.00

A SPECIAL OFFER TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

ENROL TWO NEW SUBSCRIBERS AND RECEIVE TAMIL TIMES FREE FOR AN YEAR!

If you wish to take advantage of this offer, please complete the form below and return it with the appropriate payment

The Circulation Manager,
Tamil Times, PO Box 121 Sutton, Surrey SM1 3TD

Please find enclosed cheque for £..... to cover the subscriptions of the TWO new subscribers whose posting details appear below.

New Subscriber 1

Name:.....

Address.....

.....

Sponsoredby:Name.....

New Subscriber 2

Name:.....

Address.....

.....

Address.....

.....

Election Related Violence

Over 500 election related incidents of violence have been reported by election monitoring organizations and the police as of 16 March. Most of these incidents. The Centre for Election Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) said in a media release said it was disturbed by reports received over the past few days that point to the involvement of senior politicians in acts of election-related violence.

The total since nomination day has risen to 504. Of the total the UPFA reported 225 incidents, the UNP 158 and the balance by other parties and individuals.

Most of the incidents were reported from the south of the country mainly from places Anurahapura, Dambulla, Kandy, Matale, Matara, Hanguranketa, Ampara, Batticaloa, Polonnaruwa, Gampaha, Wennapuwa, Negombo, Seeduwa and Chilaw.

Most of these incidents compared to the violent incidents that marked the December 2001 general election can be described as relatively minor.

However, in the Northeast, three murders and the prevalence of a general climate of intimidation preventing free and fair election campaigning have been reported.

The first killing in the run-up to the 2 April general elections occurred when gunmen, reportedly belonging to the Tamil Tigers, burst into a hospital and shot dead a Batticaloa district UNP candidate as he was lying in his hospital bed on Monday 1 March

Police said the assailants posing as relatives had entered the hospital in the morning under the pretext of bringing him breakfast and shot 66-year-old Sinnathamby Sunderampillai at point blank range with a pistol.

Mr. Sunderampillai was receiving treatment at the hospital after being shot and seriously injured earlier presumably by the same gang at his Kattankudy home on Saturday night, 28 February.

The victim, a former principal of a school and a father of two had been constantly receiving death threats demanding that he should withdraw his nomination.

A complaint regarding the attack was registered at the Kattankudy Police Station (EIB 4/25) by his cousin, Mr. Seenithamby Sasikumar. In this statement, he identified the LTTE as being responsible for the attack.

Sub Inspector Kobbewela in charge of Kattankudy Police confirmed that during the General Elections of 2001, Mr. Sunderampillai, who was contesting under the banner of the New Left Front, was abducted and detained for 40 days in LTTE custody.

The assassination of Sunderampillai was soon followed another political activist of the EPDP led by Douglas Devananda was gunned down in Valachchenai in the east of the island.

Twenty-eight-year-old EPDP member Ponniah Yogendran, who was actively engaged in election work on behalf of EPDP candidate Andranan Kandaswamy, was shot dead by suspected LTTE gunmen around 9.30 p.m. on Monday, 1 March, while he was at the well in the backyard of his house, according to Valachchenali Inspector M. K. Podi Mahattaya.

EPDP leader Douglas Devananda in a statement blamed the LTTE for the killing, saying Mr. Yogendran had been threatened by the Tigers earlier. "The LTTE is attempting to gain the status of sole representative of the Tamil people by annihilating all its political opponents as a means to achieve its fascist goals," the EPDP leader said in a letter to the Elections Commissioner.

He called on the polls chief to take necessary action to stop the LTTE's terrorist activities which he said hindered the conduct of a free and fair election in the North and East.

In a separate incident, an Eelam People Democratic Party (EPDP) candidate contesting the General Election in the eastern province and two others were injured in an election related grenade attack near the Kalmunai bus stand on 4 March. The injured candidate Mr.Thurairaja Lal contesting in Ampara District was distributing hand bills with his supporters in Kalmunai area when he was attacked. The van in which he was traveling was also badly damaged. EPDP in Kalmunai blamed the LTTE for the attack. The other two injured persons were identified as A.G.A. Naheem and Mohamed Farook.

In the wake of the killings, two candidates who filed nomination papers as candidates for the United National Front, Amarasingam Vinayagamoorthy from Mandoor and K.Poobalaratnam from Valaichchenai in Batticaloa district, have written to the Election commissioner that they were withdrawing their nominations for the forth coming general elections, media reports said.

The killings confirmed an earlier warning by Amnesty International of possible LTTE reprisals if Tamil candidates contested from political parties other than the Tamil National Alliance whom LTTE supported. Amnesty International had in its statement on 28 February had said that it was particularly "concerned that candidates and supporters of the Tamil political parties not allied to the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) - which the LTTE is backing in the elections - may become targets for assassination."

Meanwhile, Police Chief Indra de Silva said that in the aftermath of the two killings the police would get the help of the armed forces to curb violence. He said there were reports that several candidates were under threat and living in fear.

He also said that candidates other than those belonging to the TNA contesting the Batticaloa at the forthcoming parliamentary elections have been threatened with death by the LTTE. The LTTE had warned them that if they did not quit the campaign within a week they would be eliminated. The Batticaloa candidates had been ordered to not only withdraw from the contest within a week, but to also publish their withdrawals through newspaper advertisements. Many candidates have also reportedly received threatening telephone calls allegedly from the LTTE, according to police sources.

Meanwhile, IGP Indra de Silva said that despite LTTE death threat to the UNF candidates in the Batticaloa District, the majority of the Tamil candi-

dates had declined the offer of police protection. The Tamil candidates said that additional police security would anger the LTTE who would intensify the existing threats, the IGP said.

Killings condemned

The United States condemned the killing of a Tamil candidate in Batticaloa and called on the LTTE to act responsibly during and after the election campaign. US State department spokesman Richard Boucher in a statement also urged the LTTE to renounce terrorism or terrorist activities.

The US statement said: "The US condemns the killing of candidate Sinnathamby Sunderampillai. Although no one has claimed responsibility for the killing, we note recent statements by the LTTE that were clearly intended to discourage Tamil candidates of whom they did not approve.

"We reiterate the call made by the donor co-chairs of the Tokyo process during their meeting in Washington on February 17 that parliamentary elections be conducted in an atmosphere free of political violence. We urge the Tamil Tigers to act responsibly during and after the election campaign. Violent actions of this sort raise doubts about their commitment to a political solution and illustrate why the Tamil Tigers remain on the U.S. list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO). The US calls on the LTTE to renounce terrorism and cease terrorist acts, including political assassinations, and to comply with the terms of the ceasefire agreement it signed."

Condemning the killing of the UNP candidate in Batticaloa and the EPDP party worker in Valachchenai, the Peoples Action for Free and Fair Election (PAFFREL) pointed out that the killings have occurred in the context of a campaign declaring such candidates traitors to the Tamil cause.

"We are concerned that such a campaign coupled with political assassinations will exert a chilling, deterrent effect on the right of political parties to campaign in the Northeast and of the people to choose their elected representatives at free and fair elections," observed PAFFREL in a press release.

However, they noted that their concerns about election violence was not limited to the northeast in the wake of several incidents of violent clashes between rival political factions being reported in other parts of the country.

The manner in which the UNP candidate was killed, the release said, is particularly reprehensive as the victim was first shot and wounded and later shot to death in the Batticaloa general hospital.

PAFFREL has received complaints from political parties that they are finding it difficult if not impossible to conduct their election campaign in parts of the Northeast due to a general climate of intimidation and intolerance.

In this regard, the monitoring group called upon the government and the LTTE, "to ensure that the environment in the Northeast is conducive to a free and fair poll."

CMEV on political killings

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) states in a press release that a second election-related murder has taken place in the Batticaloa District on the night of March 1, shortly after the murder of UNF candidate Mr. Sunderampillai earlier on that day, points to the danger of the election there being turned into a grim mockery of the electoral process.

The press release said, "CMEV notes with sorrow and grave concern, that the killing of Mr. Sunderampillai is the first murder that has taken place since nominations were called for in the General Elections of 2004. Mr. Sunderampillai's murder brings into sharp relief the context in which the General Elections in the north and east will be held.

"In particular, CMEV brings the following to the urgent notice of all authorities and political actors responsible for the conduct of these elections.

"In spite of all the assurances given to us by the IGP and other police officers mandated with ensuring a violence-free election, Mr. Sunderampillai was not given any Police protection during the time that he was at the General Hospital, Batticaloa.

This is a major lapse in security and especially alarming given that his relatives had made a formal complaint regarding the attack on Mr. Sunderampillai and his house, to the Police in Kattankudy.

"We wish to raise our concerns regarding the issue of providing security to those persons who are running for elections in the north and east within the context in which the franchise of persons living in areas under LTTE control is being highlighted.

"CMEV has in past elections raised this issue and helped in facilitating a successful fundamental rights petition on behalf of voters in the Batticaloa District who were effectively disenfranchised in 2001. We strongly feel that whilst every voter in Sri Lanka must be able to exercise their franchise, they must also be able to make a free and fair choice between contesting political parties and candidates. Therefore, the ability of all candidates to campaign throughout the north and east is integral to a free and fair election.

"Mr. Ponniah Rajendran, a member of the EPDP, was shot dead in Valaichchenai at about 9.45 p.m. outside the EPDP office. The perpetrators have not been identified, although the head of the list of EPDP candidates for the Batticaloa District has gone on record stating that he suspected the LTTE of having been involved.

"The Police and the LTTE are the two actors who have the capacity to ensure the safety and security of all candidates and their supporters in the north and east. They have the primary responsibility in ensuring this and demonstrating that rhetorical commitments in this regard are backed up with effective action," the CMEV said.

"We once again appeal to all concerned with the conduct of a free and fair election to take the steps necessary to ensure that all candidates and political parties contesting the elections are given the opportunity of conducting an election campaign free of intimidation and violence, so that the voters may exercise their right to vote freely and fairly."

The UNF has complained to the Norwegian embassy and the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission over the killing of its candidate in Batticaloa and called for a full probe.

A police report and other documents on the killing of candidate S. Sundarampillai were submitted by the UNF to the Norwegians and the SLMM. The party has said that the killing - widely blamed on the LTTE - should be fully investigated.

Candidates of other political parties blamed the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) for creating a situation that placed their lives at risk. "TNA leaders should take the full responsibility for the two political killings in Batticaloa," and the atmosphere of generalized intimidation prevailing in the Northeast, a candidate told the press on condition of anonymity.

"Since TNA leaders, R Sampanthan and Joseph Pararajasingham had claimed that the TNA was contesting the election on behalf of the LTTE, these leaders and all others of the TNA should take the full responsibility for these two killings," he said adding, "If they become MPs, they will go to parliament with blood-stained hands."

Asked if they will be seeking any additional protection in view of the current killings the candidate's response was "what's the use?"

"The Tamil Tigers are claiming that they are the 'sole representatives' of the Tamil people and the TNA has endorsed that claim. That claim must be based on the assumption that the entire Tamil people support the LTTE. If that is true, why are they so frightened of a free and fair election and setting about killing rival candidates and preventing other parties from engaging freely in the election campaign? The fact is that they are the sole representatives of the gun and the bomb, and not of the Tamil people," he said.

EU observer condemns violence

Former European Union (EU), Chief Observer, John Cushnahan has condemned all election violence especially the two recent murders in Batticaloa and Valaichchenai.

Mr. Cushnahan said, "Violence has no part to play in the electoral process. Violence is the very antithesis of democracy. It was therefore extremely worrying to learn that during the first two weeks of the current election campaign, some 158 incidents of election violence have already been recorded, according to the Police Elections Secretariat.

"The two murders in Batticaloa and Valaichchenai are particularly disturbing. They are a direct attack on the fundamental rights of political parties to organize, move and campaign freely. If an EU Election Observation Mission is sent to Sri Lanka, this is one of the key criteria it would assess during its work.

"If the integrity of the democratic process in Sri Lanka is to be protected, then this election must take place in an atmosphere free from violence and intimidation," Mr. Cushnahan said.

TULF leader V. Anandasangari, who is leading an independent group of candidates from Jaffna, has told Norwegian Special Envoy Erik Solheim about the LTTE's strong-arm tactics in Jaffna. "I briefed him about the situation in Jaffna and told him about what was happening there. I said that the people of Jaffna should be permitted to make their own decision on who they want to vote for," the TULF leader said. The LTTE obstructing his campaign in Jaffna would not help the organization to gain proper recognition. He said the LTTE was using 48 vehicles without number plates, and continued to intimidate and threaten his candidates. "Around 7000 leaflets and posters printed in support of my party were set on fire close to the University of Jaffna last week. Private transport operators including three-wheeler owners have been warned not to provide transport facilities to our candidates," Anadasangaree had told the Norwegians adding that all these acts were violations of the ceasefire agreement.

The meeting with Eric Solheim, Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brastkar and a member of the Norwegian peace delegation Lisa Golden at the Norwegian Embassy in Colombo following well publicized complaint from Anandasangari that the Norwegian Peace Envoy and the Norwegian Ambassador did not meet with him in Jaffna during their recent visit to the peninsula though they met with others including the LTTE leader in Jaffna, Mr Ilamparithy. "I had so many things to duscuss with him. I am sure he knew that and avoided me," the TULF leader had said.

Amnesty urges LTTE not to kill

The London based international human rights organisation, Amnesty International on urged the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka not to kill opponents ahead of parliamentary elections in April and said widespread human rights abuses during the campaign was a major concern.

In a statement issued on 28 February AI said it was worried that candidates who do not have the backing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) could become targets for assassination.

The LTTE is not contesting the elections called by President Chandrika Kumaratunga on April 2, nearly four years ahead of schedule, but announced that it would back a moderate group, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), which is largely seen as a Tigers proxy.

"We are particularly concerned that candidates and supporters of (minority) Tamil political parties not allied to the TNA - which the LTTE is backing in the elections - may become targets for assassination," Amnesty said in its statement.

It also called for the freedom of movement for political activists in areas held by the Tamil Tigers.

It said the LTTE was suspected to be behind the assassinations and attempted killings of more than 50 members of Tamil political groups and several Muslim civilians since a ceasefire took effect in February 2002.

"We are also appealing to all parties contesting the elections to put human rights at the heart of their agenda," Amnesty said.

It called on parties to make clear their commitment to undertaking reforms to ensure protection and promotion of human rights, ending impunity and ratifying international rights and humanitarian standards.

"The potential for serious and widespread human rights abuses during the campaigning period is now a major concern," Amnesty said.

It said there were already reports of over 100 election-related incidents of violence, including injuries to 40 party activists in clashes in southern and north-central regions after the close of nominations.

Four people were also allegedly abducted by the LTTE in the east of the island since the elections were announced, Amnesty said.

The campaign for the December 2001 parliamentary election was marred by violence that left at least 41 people dead and over 700 wounded. Nine people were killed in one incident on voting day. ❐

The April Fools Election and Post-Election Possibilities

Rajan Philips

The almost April Fools election, an election about nothing and one nobody wanted, has suddenly become the moving stage for a political drama that is unfolding as no one could have predicted. The election itself is not the drama, but everything around it is. The latest Act in the unfolding drama is the act of 'internal self-determination' inside the LTTE.

Before the LTTE stunner, the biggest surprise was the nomination of over 280 Buddhist Monks as candidates, threatening to take away votes from the new SLFP-JVP alliance (UPFA) representing the so called 'children of 1956'. The leftovers of the Old Left Parties (the once great LSSP and CP), who were the only beacon of sanity in 1956, are now somewhere sandwiched between the SLFP and the JVP. The People's Alliance that propelled Kumaratunga to power has passed away, without so much as an obituary, even though its friendly fellow travellers are still talking about the 'PA component' in the FA.

Fed up with the politics of the two plagued houses, the UNP and the SLFP, other voices are campaigning to be heard in the nation's parliament. On the right is Swarajya, a new group of candidates drawn from professionals, bankers, farmers and fishermen, and invoking the traditions and symbols of Mahatma Gandhi. On the Left, trying to re-establish the Old Left tradition of providing effective and informed Opposition in Parliament, are the candidates of the New Left Front. In the middle is the National People's Party, gendering the Colombo District with a slate of 23 women candidates. All in all there are over 6000 candidates for 225 seats in what many consider to be a wasteful presidential whim of an election.

The election infection has not spared the LTTE. But like Brahmins using intermediate castes as 'pollution neutralizers', in the old caste society, the LTTE has ordained the Tamil National Association (TNA) candidates to be its mouthpieces in Parliament. In the past, the Tamil Federal Party considered it 'traitorous' for a Tamil MP to join the Sri Lankan cabinet until the four basic demands of the Tamils, as formulated by the Federal Party, were agreed to by the Sri Lankan state. In 1965, the only time the Federalists had a representative in the cabinet, the Party finessed around its rules by sending an unelected Senator (the late M. Tiruchelvam, Q.C.) to the cabinet instead of an elected MP. The LTTE took matters further and tried to virtually taboo any Tamil from being an MP in Colombo. If it is a sign of its mellowing that it is now allowing proxies as candidates, by obstructing and intimidating other candidates the LTTE is also signalling that old habits die hard.

The main backdrop to the unfolding drama is of course the ceasefire and the political complacency induced by it. It is this complacency that made Chandrika Kumaratunga constitutionally hyperactive and put Ranil Wickremasinghe to sleep. The ceasefire circumstances have also induced the dramatic schism in the hitherto monolithic LTTE. To their credit the President and the Prime Minister have so far taken a principled position of non-interference in regard to the LTTE split. Apparently, the Prime Minister has indicated that the government should not 'fish in troubled waters'. For Chandrika Kumaratunga, it is a total turnaround from her earlier denunciations of the peace process and the ceasefire agreement. On their campaign trails, they both agree about pursuing peace with the Tigers, but they differ as to who is the better person to lead that process.

The important issue after the elections will not be about who is better in handling the peace process, but how to bring pressure on both Kumaratunga and Wickremasinghe to work together in the peace process. It might be uncharitable to say that their limitations surpass their abilities, but it is correct to say that in regard to the peace process their abilities will complement each other. More than any other Sinhalese politician, past or present, they share the common ground that the Sri Lankan state should be restructured to include the nationalist aspirations of not only the Sinhalese but also of the Tamils and Muslims. It would be the task of the peace groups outside parliament to act in concert to pressurise the two leaders to work together.

Unfortunately, the peace groups are not without political preferences. They all agree on the objectives of the peace process and the concept of a federal solution. But they are politically divided as to whether peace and federalism are better pursued under Chandrika Kumaratunga's leadership or Ranil Wickremasinghe's leadership. The pattern since 1994 has been that NGOs and individuals closer to one camp are active when 'their side' is leading the peace parade, and are sidelined and even turn cynical when the 'other side' takes control. Unless the peace universe closes ranks and mobilises broader support to bring pressure on the two leaders and their parties to work together, there can be little hope of any substantive progress in the peace process. Specifically, it would be necessary to coordinate the peace efforts within the current constitutional system, address the growing confusion and insecurity in the Sinhalese Buddhist society, and navigate the peace process with the LTTE in the context of its North-East split.

Constitutional Cohabitation, or Parliamentary Tyranny?

The architects and the apologists of the 1978 Constitution got it backwards in identifying consensus politics as a principal objective of the constitution. Consensus politics, if at all, is a precondition for the success of the 1978 constitution and not its assured outcome. The main merit of the 1978 Constitution was in ending the parliamentary tyrannies that were becoming the norm under the first-past-the-post voting system. The massive majorities won by the SLFP, in 1972, and by the UNP, in 1977, were turned into tyrannies that

alienated the minorities, especially the Tamils, and produced two partisan constitutions: the overly flexible and short-lived 1972 (SLFP) Constitution, and the overly rigid and long-living 1978 (UNP) Constitution. While the Presidential system that was introduced in 1978 and the proportional representation that came into effect in 1988 have put an end to parliamentary tyrannies, the political class is neither committed to nor knowledgeable about the hybrid presidential-parliamentary system.

President Kumaratunga now seems to be campaigning for a two-thirds majority for the SLFP-JVP alliance to enable her to change the 1978 Constitution and subject it to a referendum, as well as for a mandate to adopt a constitutional bill even with a simple majority and subject it to a referendum. This is like taking the 'heads I win, tails you lose' approach to plebiscites, and is really an insult to people's intelligence. If the alliance does not secure a two-thirds majority, it means the electorate is not giving her the mandate to change the constitution. She cannot then have a fallback position that a simple majority is mandate enough. Furthermore, a two-thirds majority, unlikely as it is, would be a senseless return to the parliamentary tyrannies of the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1994, leading the People's Alliance to victory, Chandrika Kumaratunga vowed to change the 1978 constitution. Her position then was that the 1978 constitution was more the result of the personal compulsions of its principal architect, J.R. Jayewardene, than a response to the objective needs of the country. In the aftermath of the PA victory, there were expectations that she would invoke the 'doctrine of necessity' to change the constitution without conforming to its rigid amending procedures, for the greater political good of the people and for bringing about a constitutional resolution to the Tamil question. Even so, it is unthinkable that she would have been able to change the constitution without at least a partial support from the UNP Opposition.

Since winning her second term in 1999, however, Chandrika Kumaratunga has been using the Jayewardene constitution to reinforce her political relevance, with no regard to the objective situation in the country. Her last constitutional act was using the inexplicable and extraordinary power of dissolution, that Article 70 (1) (a) confers on a President over Parliament, to dismiss the Wickremasinghe government while it had a majority in parliament and to call the April election four years prematurely. Her obvious intent in asking again for a mandate to change the constitution is to end the presidential system when her presidential term expires in 2006 (not 2005, thanks again to J.R. Jayewardene's self-serving Third Amendment), and sneak into Parliament as Prime Minister. She has lost every moral qualification necessary to ask for this mandate, and she should not be allowed to unilaterally change the constitution.

An SLFP-JVP majority, while it should not lead to constitutional changes, would leave the President enormously powerful. The fact that the SLFP-JVP alliance has not designated a Prime Ministerial candidate shows their lack of understanding or utter contempt for parliamentary traditions. In the event of an SLFP-JVP victory, the President will make the call as to who will be her puppet Prime Minister. The electorate would have had no say in the matter. This is hardly the respect for parliament and for the people that one might expect from a President who wants a mandate to abolish the presidential system in order to restore parliamentary governance. The important question, however, is whether the JVP, as part of the government, will acquiesce with the President's conduct of the peace process, or whether she would be able to use her powers to override the JVP if the latter turns out to be difficult. The question also is whether the UNP, as an opposition party, will either support the continuation of the peace process that is led by Ms. Kumaratunga, or revert to the traditional opposition mode. Whatever the scenario, there has to be public pressure on the two main parties to stay the course in regard to the peace process.

It is a moot point as to what President Kumaratunga should do if the electorate gives UNP a parliamentary majority in the April election, as it did in the 2001 election. She should resign if she has any respect for propriety, but she won't because she has none. In the circumstances, her resignation will create more confusion than her continuation in office. Will the UNP move to impeach her? After the 2001 election, the UNP's impeachment threat was intended as a counter to the President's power of dissolution. The President's lawyers seized on this and manufactured the spurious argument that her right to arbitrarily dissolve parliament anytime after one year of an election is the constitutional equivalent of the highly restricted power of parliament

Motor & Home Insurance

All Classes of Insurance Transacted
At Very Competitive Rates
Young Drivers Specialists
Special Rates for Ladies/Mature Drivers

● Building ● Fire Liability
● Shop/Office ● Health Insurance

Instalment Terms Available
Computerised Quotes

J. Kulendran

MEMBER
General Insurance
STANDARDS COUNCIL

Beddington Insurance Services (Wimbledon) Limited
157A, Hartfield Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 3TJ.
Tel: 020 8543 5181
Fax: 020 8543 7158
We Excel in The Personal Service We Provide

to impeach a president. Given the unlikelihood of her dissolving parliament yet again before 2006, the UNP would do well to put aside the threat of impeachment and work with the President.

In the event of a widely predicted hung parliament with neither group winning a majority, President Kumaratunga will use every trick to avoid calling Ranil Wickremasinghe to be the new Prime Minister. The latter's position in the UNP may even come under challenge if the UNP fails to obtain the largest number of seats at the election. Even if the President recognizes Ranil Wickremasinghe as the Prime Minister of a minority government, she would still be bent on dictating terms on the formation of cabinet and the conduct of the peace process.

The one positive aspect of the April election is that it exhausts all possible avenues of fighting between Chandrika Kumaratunga and Ranil Wickremasinghe. One would hope that they have learnt their lessons and will not repeat the sordid experience of the last two years. More positively, they should realize the new urgency for working together in light of the developments within the LTTE and the growing disenchantment with the peace process among the Sinhalese.

The Peace Process and Sinhalese Anxieties

The emergence of the Jathika Hela Urmaya and its 280 Buddhist clerical candidates is one indication of the mood of confusion and insecurity among Sinhalese Buddhists. The peace process is not the only cause of this disturbing mood, but it could be the main casualty. The handling of the peace process by the Wickremasinghe government, as well as the criticisms of the peace process by the President and her entourage have contributed to Sinhalese disenchantment with the peace process.

Underlying the political mistakes is the failure of both the PA and the UNP governments to address the uneven sharing of the benefits and disbenefits of the open economy. Sri Lankans, in general, have favoured the open-economy, introduced by the UNP in 1977 after two decades of semi-autarchic and bureaucratic economic controls under SLFP-led governments. But vast numbers of them have been badly bruised by the policy shift and left unprotected by the concomitant dismantling of the country's welfare-state safety net. The Wickremasinghe government revived the economy from its disastrous slump in 2001, when President Chandrika Kumaratunga tried to be Head of State, Head of Government, Commander in Chief, and Minister of Everything. But once again the UNP government failed to address the human consequences of the open economy, even as Prime Minister Wickremasinghe turned a blind eye to exposures and allegations of corruption and power abuses involving senior members of his government.

For some mysterious reason, the Wickremasinghe government never took the message of peace to its ultimate constituents, the Sinhalese Buddhists. Instead, after the initial peace euphoria, the Sinhala people, especially the vast majority of them outside Colombo, were left with a feeling of abandonment in the face of what became an arrogant display of peace triumphalism in Colombo. The government failed to bring the army into confidence and facilitate its transition from the earlier combat mode to the new ceasefire situation. This further alienated the social base of the army, the Sinhalese villages, and adding insult to injury was the perception that the government was bending over backwards to accommodate the LTTE.

The nationalist sentiments of the Sinhalese were hurt by what was seen as supine grovelling on the part of the Prime Minister towards the West, the United States in particular. The government was seen to be more concerned about dealing the diplomats in Colombo than being open with the country's people and its parliament. The globe trotting peace talks with no evidence of change on the ground eroded the people's support for the process and bred public cynicism instead. Pieter Keunaman's witty adaptation, in the early 1950s, of the old Royal Navy advertisement, "join the UNP (government) and seethe world", took on a fancier ring fifty years later: join the (Sri Lankan) peace process and see the world!

The Buddhist community was also angered by the neo-conversion activities of mushrooming Christian fundamentalists, allegedly sustained by American stipends. Neither the President nor the Prime Minister showed leadership in dealing with this issue and their abdication left the door open for senseless proselytization, on the one hand, and fearmongering and bigotry, on the other. The government lawyers apparently slept at the bar while the Supreme Court handed down a rather tendentious ruling on an innocuous bill to statutorily incorporate an organization of Catholic nuns and turned the social problem of religious conversion into a legal and constitutional issue. On the other side of the political divide, the criticisms of the ceasefire agreement and the peace process by the President, her permanent adviser, Lakshman Kadirgamar, her legal luminary, H.L. de Silva, and a host of others, on the grounds of national security, Sri Lankan sovereignty, constitutional propriety, Norwegian partiality etc. etc., became coded signals that sowed the seeds of doubts and confusion among the Sinhalese.

All these developments crystalized to pierce a raw nerve in the Sinhalese social psyche, stirring up old insecurities that many thought had been mostly exorcised, and charismatically seizing the late Ven. Gangodawila Soma Thera to provide a new voice to old fears. The tumultuous mourning that followed Soma Thera's untimely death in December was indicative of the disquiet mood of the Sinhalese Buddhists. The disquiet mood of the people encouraged the 'communal trouble makers' to come out of their hibernation, where they had been after 1983, and start attacking Christian churches. Finally, in the wake of the President's election call, over two hundred and eighty Buddhist monks have been nominated as candidates for the April election under the banner of the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), the new name of the Sinhala Urumaya group.

The electoral inspiration for the emergence of the JHU and the clerical candidates should be traced to the formation of the SLFP-JVP alliance. The latter was an open (all codes abandoned) call to mobilize the Sinhalese Buddhist constituency for a premeditated and premature election. On the eve of the alliance's signing ceremony, the JVP firebrand Wimal Weerawansa proclaimed that the alliance marked the

beginning of a new cultural odyssey for the Sinhalese, starting from where their ancestors were before the arrival of the Portuguese and Christianity in the sixteenth century. The alliance also received the god-fatherly endorsement by the Jathika Chinthanaya (JC) ideologues that the new alliance is the political coming of age of "the children of 1956". The latter reference, as is well known, recalls the 1956 enthronement of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, embraces only the Sinhalese Buddhist children, and excludes the 'other' children of 1956, the Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese Christian children.

The JC ideologues are not thrilled about the monks coming forward as candidates. Apart from their fear that the monks will divide the Sinhalese Buddhist vote, the JC ideologues do not think that parliament is the place for the Buddhist clergy to play its traditional role of defending the faith and advising the state. The so called traditional role is nothing more than a rhetorical reference to the triadic relationship of the ruler, the robe and the plough that was the hallmark of the old society, when the population was small, scattered and simply structured. This rhetoric is of little help to discussing the role of the 30,000 strong Buddhist clergy in the modern and complex society of 15 million Sinhalese Buddhists, who are also sharing a small island and an increasingly integrated world with others who are not Sinhalese Buddhists. The Sinhalese political and social leaders who support the peace process should not abdicate their responsibility to discuss the religious and cultural concerns of their people. These issues constitute the political and cultural dimensions of the peace process, and so far they have been neglected in peace discussions and decision making as a result of the somewhat esoteric focus on 'conflict resolution' between the government and the LTTE.

The Peace Stalemate and the LTTE Split

The power struggle and the election distractions in the south came as a great disappointment to Tamils in Sri Lanka and in the diaspora. After two years of ending hostilities, there has been no relief to the thousands of displaced Tamils in the North. The peace talks themselves have been stalled since April 2003, and the government and the LTTE have failed to take advantage of the international aid commitment and undertake reconstruction of the war affected areas. The much anticipated LTTE proposals for a Northeast Interim Administration were delivered to the Wickremasinghe government on the last day of October, 2003. But President Kumaratunga stole the thunder a day later by sacking three members of the Wickremasinghe cabinet. Nonetheless, the LTTE remained remarkably self-composed about the southern power struggle while taking advantage of the situation to consolidate its position and establish a one-party polity in the North and East. Of all the actors on the political stage, only the LTTE seemed to have a script of it own. All of that has changed with th Batticaloa eruption.

Whatever happens to Mr. V. Mura litharan (Colonel Karuna) and his Batticaloa brigade, the political fallout from his challenge to the LTTE leadership will be far reaching. In one master stroke, Karuna has internalised the collective Tamil demand for regional autonomy from Colombo. His demand to the LTTE leadership was to release Eastern Province Command from being under 30 or so LTTE departments in the Vanni, and allow it to function as a separate unit, with its own administrative departments, and reporting directly to the LTTE leader, Mr. V. Prabhakaran. With a touch of symbolism, he has also subdivided Tamil Eelam into Northern Tamil Eelam and Southern Tamil Eelam - the respective Tamil appellations of the two subdivisions have a (Tamil) poetic ring to them: *Vada Thamizh Ezham* and *Then Thamizh Ezham*!

Whether or not there are subjective motivations and organizational machinations (Pottu Amman vs. Karuna Amman etc.) behind Karuna's move is irrelevant to the political fallout; however, the subjective and internal factors will weigh heavily on the LTTE's initial response to Karuna's 'traitorous behaviour'. In the past, the opaque workings of its organization allowed the LTTE leadership to deal with internal dissent ruthlessly and summarily. It has also dealt with and continues to deal with outside detractors, no less ruthlessly and always with impunity. In the case of Karuna, however, any covert retaliatory action will have to be taken in the glare of global scrutiny and at the high price of damaging the new international image that the LTTE has been cultivating during the last several months. Taking military action against Karuna would appear to be even riskier, as it would disrupt the ceasefire equilibrium with the Sri Lankan army, lead to significant loss of life on both sides, and create public resentment towards

Easy Switch

REMORTGAGES

Now available for Buy-to-Let

Unlock the value in your home or reduce your Re-payment

e.g. Loan of £250000 for 25 years - Repayment @5.7% - £1565.22 per month switch to 3.25% - £1218.29 per month - £4163 per annum saving or for the current repayment you can borrow £70000 at no extra monthly cost.

Available for remortgaging, home improvements and deposits for additional property

Free valuation fee, free standard legal service, Cashback, No income confirmation for loans up to 85% LTV.

Online Mortgage:

Fully Credit Scored decisions in principle in minutes. You can use your certificate to show sellers that your mortgage is arranged in principle, which can put you in a stronger bargaining position.

P.Srinivasan IFA - 020 8763 2221

30 years of continues service to the community

YOUR HOME IS AT RISK IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR OTHER LOAN SECURED ON IT

the LTTE in the East. Unsurprisingly, the LTTE has announced that it will retake areas under Karuna's control without resorting to violence.

Colonel Karuna's real military strength and organizational resources are still unclear, although according to independent reports he is certainly not an isolated maverick. His main problem will be that he will now have to manage without bursaries from the Vanni, and he is unlikely to have comparable revenue sources as the LTTE. His 6000-strong camp is supposedly the largest of all of LTTE's camps, and accounts for 40% of the LTTE's total manpower. Without alternative revenues, Karuna will have a hard time feeding his army. For this reason, he would be more amenable and anxious to making a deal with the government.

The more serious political issue is Karuna's challenge to the LTTE's sole representative status. The LTTE has formally asked the Sri Lankan government not to deal with their erstwhile Eastern Commander, although informal contacts through intercessors will continue. The LTTE will certainly object to Karuna or his representative taking a seat at the peace talks if and when they are resumed. But the LTTE cannot protest indefinitely if Karuna and his dissidents prove to be durable. At the least, the LTTE will have to include in its delegation a prominent representation from Batticaloa, which may turn out to be a non-LTTE Tamil civilian acceptable to Karuna. There were rumblings in Batticaloa about the composition of the LTTE's 'Experts Panel' that met in Paris and Dublin to draft the IA proposals. It did not go down well in Batticaloa, that while the panel included Shiva Pasupathy, the former Sri Lankan Attorney General who led the prosecution against the TULF leaders for agitating for a separate Tamil Eelam, it did not include a single 'prominent' person representing the Eastern Province. Ironically, the only person representing the East on that panel was Colonel Karuna. For the "trousered Tamils of Batticaloa" - to borrow S.J.V. Chelvanaykam's description of middle-class Batticaloa Tamils who opposed the Federal Party, Colonel Karuna, shorn of medals and titles, has been nothing more than a thug and a bully. They considered Karuna's inclusion in the LTTE panel as a mere tokenism and of little import to the concerns of the East.

The Karuna phenomenon also opens an opportunity to include Muslim representation in future talks. Colonel Karuna has been no friend of the Muslims in the East, and, in the immediate aftermath of the ceasefire agreement, the common perception was that Karuna was the loose cannon attacking civilians and Muslims in disregard of the spirit and terms of the ceasefire agreement. So far, he has not made any reference to the Muslims in his frequent statements, perhaps a sign of his isolation from the Muslims. Or, it is a continuing manifestation of the LTTE ideology that defines its constituency in 'ethnic' Tamil terms, rather than the broader concept of 'Tamil speaking people' that Chelvanayakam used to include the Muslims and the plantation Tamils.

The truth of the matter is that before S.J.V. Chelvanyakam and the Federal Party, there never was a Tamil political organization that united the Tamils of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The split in the LTTE leaves S.J.V. Chelvanayakam as the only leader, in Tamil history, who not only achieved Tamil unity in politics but also passed it on to his successors. In the light of LTTE's organizational structure and Colonel Karuna's complaints, it is useful to recall that Chelvanyakam and the Federal Party took deliberate steps to keep the East 'on side'. The Party functioned as a democratic organization; it held periodical conventions with election of Party officials; and it obtained and renewed its mandate from the people through free and fair elections. The official leadership of the Party alternated between representatives of the different Tamil regions and a number of Eastern Province parliamentarians have served as Party Presidents with distinction. Eastern Province MPs were part of the two historic negotiations that the Federal Party leaders had with Sri Lankan Prime Ministers in 1957 and 1965. In those negotiations, come to think of it, the Federal Party conducted itself as the 'sole representative' of the Tamils. But it took it in its stride, and no one questioned its status.

The LTTE is now paying the price for insisting on 'sole representative status' without democratically restructuring its organization after the ceasefire agreement. The monolithic command structure that served LTTE as a military enterprise, cannot be easily maintained in the circumstances of a prolonged ceasefire even without permanent peace. From the standpoint of Tamil society, a key objective of the peace process is the transformation of the LTTE into a political organization that accepts the politics of pluralism and believes in dealing with differences through peaceful democratic means without recourse to killing and violence. The prolonged peace stalemate has taken away the outside pressure on the LTTE to transform itself. The split in the LTTE may have the positive effect of triggering an internal thrust for organizational change. The task of the peace groups after the election would be to get the peace process restarted and re-impose the external pressure on the LTTE and its dissidents to democratically transform themselves. The democratic transformation of the LTTE is not a utopian expectation but a practical necessity. The alternative is the anarchic disintegration of the LTTE with its 15,000 fighting cadres and caches of firepower, a prospect that will be injurious not only to the Tamils but all Sri Lankans.

To conclude, the April election has been called primarily for Chandrika Kumaratunga to retake control over Parliament and enable her to succeed herself from the Gaullist presidency to Westminster premiership. In fairness to her, her actions are not uniquely selfish but are only a pre-emptive counter-checkmate to Ranil Wickremasinghe's plan to run her out of office in 2005 (according to his counting, not hers) and for him to take control of both the presidency and parliament. For the country, their checkmating each other is better than one of them taking control of all state power. This was what the people in their collective wisdom decided in 2001, and this is what they should affirm again. Although unnecessary and unwanted, the April election could have a cathartic effect on Ms. Kumaratunga and Mr. Wickremasinghe by making them realize that they have exhausted every avenue of confrontation and conflict and that they have no other option but to cohabit and co-operate. They have to do that in order to navigate the country through the constitutional quagmire, address Sinhalese apprehensions about the peace process, and carry forward the peace process to resolve the Tamil and Muslim questions and to democratise the LTTE. ❐

Tamil nationalism at its crossroads

Sathya

Colonel Karuna, the Batticalo/ Amparai leader of the LTTE, in his letter to LTTE leader Veluppilai Pirapakaran made public on March 5 declared that he wished to serve the people of 'South Tamil Eelam' and that it was his wish to die at their feet.

He further appealed to Prabhakaran that if he believed in the people and the fighters of Batticaloa/Amparai, he should allow them to work independently under his (i.e. Pirabhakaran's) leadership.

The response of the LTTE leader and the Vanni-based "National Leadership" was predictable. In a statement issued the following day at a Press Conference in Killnochchi, the LTTE announced that Karuna had been "discharged from the Liberation Tigers and relieved of his responsibilities" for having "planned to secede himself from the liberation organization". The charge was that Karuna, "instigated by some malicious elements opposed to the Tamil Eelam Liberation struggle, acting traitorously to the Tamil people and the Tamil Eelam National Leadership, has planned to secede himself from the liberation organization".

The stage was thus set for an internecine conflict that could prove to be bloody with wires and cyber space getting clogged with reports of clashes, assassinations and conspiracies involving an "external hand", including the Indian intelligence RAW and Sri Lanka's military-intelligence apparatus. The involvement of western actors in either trying to patch up the differences between Pirapakaran and Karuna or in tilting towards the Vanni-based leadership has also drawn the attention of conspiracy theorists. This is not to suggest that these conspiracy theories are necessarily wrong. Time is the best judge.

What is of particular concern are not the reports centred on personality clashes, power struggle and conspiracy theories relating to the Karuna episode. The theme of this column, however, is a reflection on the particular conjuncture in which Tamil Nationalism finds itself today. A reflection prompted by the Karuna episode and the wider ramifications it has on Tamil nationalism and its future trajectory. Sathya, being a Tamil whose ancestral roots are in Vadamarachchy in Jaffna district on his father's side and in Vanni on his mother's side, does so in a somber mood which could well reflect the collective Tamil psyche and all the apprehension and anxieties that go along with it.

Tamil Nationalism has always prided itself in its self-perceived homogeneity and manifest destiny. Tamils were a distinct nationality. Tamils had a clearly identifiable homeland comprising the Northern and Eastern provinces. And, as such the Tamils had the inalienable right to self-determination that includes the right to secede. The above was the basis on which Tamil nationalism advanced its case, initially through peaceful means, and later through the force of arms in the face of State repression.

These are concepts and assertions that were taken for granted by Tamil nationalism, embodied in the 'Thimpu Principles'. Its antecedent could also be found in the Federal Party convention in the 50s and the Vaddukkodai resolution of May 14, 1976. Identities based on class, caste, gender, religious and regional diversities were all subsumed under this homogeneous category. Everything had to be placed on hold till the Tamils got their "Tamil Eelam".

Gradually, the socialist and Marxist-Leninist influences began to challenge this notion of homogeneity and stressed on the importance of differentiating the Tamil Nationality into the equally important sub-categories and sub-strata cited above. This was the focus of youth radicalism during the mid-70s and the early 80s . However, the intensification of State repression against the legitimate peaceful and democratic struggles of the Tamil national movement and frequent state-sponsored pogroms, pushed the broad Tamil National Movement as well as its progressive and left-oriented components into giving primacy to armed resistance.

In this, the ultra-Tamil nationalist tendencies gained ascendance till today we have the claim of the LTTE as the "sole representative" that would give leadership to the entire Tamil struggle under a single national leader and leadership. This came out in sharp relief when LTTE's Political Wing leader S. P. Thamilselvan told the media following his meeting with the TNA in Kilinochchi on 17th February, "We unanimously decided today that the Tamil people should vote only for the policies of the TNA.

This is the wish of our leader and leadership. The Tamils should unite under one leadership and one policy for this election". Incidentally the "one policy" included the demand for the acceptance and implementation of the LTTE's proposal for an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) for the North-East. That the proposal is in itself unitarist and majoritarian in form and content within the North-East is conveniently ignored by Tamil nationalism. The Tamil nationalist demand for autonomy and federalism it appears is only vis a vis the State.

At the outset it must be emphasised that the Karuna episode is not something that relates to a single, deranged individual as the LTTE leadership has put out. In fact, it must be noted that almost all Tamil militant organizations had to contend with a Eastern local leadership that constantly demanded autonomy. As such the assertion by Karuna should not come as a surprise.

But it did come as a rude shock to the Tamil ultra-nationalist who believed that it is only an organization like the LTTE which is centralized, authoritarian and which stood by the dictum, "might is right" that could deliver their "Tamil Eelam". The assertiveness of Karuna and the challenge thrown by him to the centralized leadership has shattered this image.

The only way that the LTTE could

restore that image is to carry out a swift military putsch against Karuna or a cloak and dagger assassination bid. It is beyond the LTTE innate character to accommodate pluralism and diversity within its organization, akin to Tamil Nationalism's innate tendency to negate diversity and pluralism within Tamil society.

This is not in any way to project Karuna as the democrat or as the alternative to God himself as Karuna referred to Pirabhakaran in his open letter to him in a tone that combined defiance with reverence. In fact, Sathya is of the opinion that Karuna had begun seeing himself as the Pirapakaran of the East and the challenge posed by Karuna to the LTTE leader is both an assertion of regionalism as well as his military power centre.

Here again it must be clearly understood that regionalism in the East is not a new phenomenon. In fact it is the result of years of perceived grievance that the East is being dominated by the North. But, it is a perception that is shared largely by the intelligentsia and the ruling elites of the East against the intelligentsia and the ruling elites of the North. Karuna and Pirapakaran are only the agents of these ruling elites who have manipulated them to serve their own interests. Therein lies the ingredients of the unfolding Greek Tragedy.

The time has come for Tamil Nationalism to look inwards. It has reached its crossroads. It is not Sathya's contention that Tamil nationalism will whither away. Neither would the notion of a Tamil traditional homeland that encompasses the North and East as one single politico-administrative entity simply fade away simply because of the Karuna factor.

It will not as long as Sinhala Nationalism holds sway over the body politic in Sri Lanka and denies the Tamil People their due identity, democratic and political rights.

At the same time the North and the Jaffna-centric Tamil nationalist leadership cannot afford to take the East for granted or deny political diversity and pluralism within the totality of the Tamil nationality.

The time has come for Tamil Nationalism to be People-centred rather than Land-centred. Sathya will have more to say on this theme at an appropriate time and conjuncture ❐

Parliamentary election and the National Question

Sumanasiri Liyanage

Prof. G. L. Peiris, media spokesperson for the UNF, is reported to have said that if the Freedom Alliance (FA) comes to power in the next Parliamentary election, scheduled to be held on April 2004 the peace process would definitely be in jeopardy.

To substantiate his conclusion, he referred to the differences in opinion between the constituent parties of the FA, particularly between the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), over the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Earlier JVP was reported to have taken the position that it was unhappy about the CFA. Many have expressed certain reservations about the CFA; and suggested that it needs to be revised.

Five well-known conflict analysts in their recent publication (The Sri Lankan Peace Process at Crossroads by Tyrol Ferdinands, Kumar Rupasinghe, Paikiyasothy Saravanamuttu, Jayadeva Uyangoda and Norbert Ropers) on the Sri Lankan peace process have discussed the limits of the CFA in dealing with complex issues and recommended revisions.

In my opinion, the peace process has now encountered serious problems; and these problems may be partly attributed to the way in which the process was handled by the GoSL particularly Prof. G. L. Peiris and the GoSL delegates to the peace talks.

Its future has become more uncertain when the political crisis in Colombo reached its climax in the last three months. The current state of affairs related to the peace process may be attributed to six reasons. First, peace processes are complex and peace-making is always difficult so that it is natural for the process to go through hard periods. This is common to the Sri Lankan peace process as well.

Secondly, the UNF government has subordinated the agenda of the peace process for the benefit of its political agenda. So the idea was to drag it on until the next Presidential election.

Thus, the rhythm of the peace process was tuned to the benefits of UNF's electoral time frame; and this, after some time created disastrous results. The current political crisis in Colombo is a necessary corollary of the UNF peace strategy that included isolation of the President and also other stakeholders in the South.

Thirdly, the analytical framework within which the peace talks were conducted has had serious flaws and is essentially incorrect. Norwegian facilitators do not seem to have learnt any lessons from their failed peace brokering. Fourthly, Prof. Peiris and the GoSL delegates have demonstrated incapacity in handling peace talks.

The clear evidence for this was the drop of the idea of interim administration at the second round of talks held in Thailand. The inability to develop a win-win solution for the issue of high security zones was another example.

It seems that their main concern was to have personal rapport with the LTTE delegates and not to deal with substantial issues. Fifthly, GoSL totally marginalised Muslims in the Eastern province and their security was not connected with the peace process.

This has made the Eastern Province simmering. Sixthly, international actors, with possible exception of the USA and India, appear to be doing 'more harm' than 'no harm' because of their non-conflict sensitive approaches and activities.

This shows that whichever government that comes to power in the next Parliamentary election needs to rethink the entire process; and it has to be reframed if the Sri Lankan government is serious about the success of the peace process. So, what is needed is to stop

fearing the 'ne goni billas' created by Prof. Peiris and to understand and face the real threats that are harmful for the peace process.

When the future of the peace process is viewed from this perspective, Prof. Peiris and his party do not fair well. In the above mentioned work, Tyrol Ferdinands et al argue that '(a)ny final solution to the conflict has to be based on a fundamental restructuring of the Sri Lankan state' (p.20).

This final solution and the current state of affairs in the region should be temporarily linked by an interim rule. What is/was the UNF position on this issue? Unfortunately, UNF has put the country in absolute darkness.

In the long constitutional discourse in 1995-2000, the United National Party did not make any positive and constructive contribution; rather it identified any kind of power-sharing as a proposal that would lead to the division of the country. Have the leaders of the UNP come out with a different perception in the last two years? The answer is absolutely not. The so-called Oslo Communique does not show that the GoSL and the LTTE have come to any kind of agreement on this vital issue.

Similarly, in June and July 2003, the UNF led GoSL came out with two proposals on interim administration. Both proposals were understandably rejected by the LTTE and those proposals were far behind the People's Alliance proposals in 2000.

Nothing substantive was included in the election manifesto of the UNF in 2001. So when it comes to the issue of state restructuring, the UNF seems to have no position, a position that can be defended via-a-vis the interests of Sinhalas, Thamils and Muslims.

PA is the only major political party in the South with clear and explicit design for state restructuring. One may of course see many flaws in this design, and many positive suggestions can be made in order to improve it. Nonetheless, PA proposals delineate the boundaries within which three nations could come to some compromised solution within a one state unit.

Definitely these boundaries are and should be flexible by allowing room and space for negotiations. However, it does not mean that this is the only option available. One available option that I can think is a non-violent separation since I am not convinced that the so-called confederal solution would be practical and sustainable.

The option of separation may pose many problems internally (population transfer, compensation for immovable property etc) as well as regionally (disturbing regional political configuration). The positive features of the PA proposal are that it not only identified the characteristics of the 'final solution' but also outlines how to deal with the interim period.

The next question that needs to be addressed is whether the PA's position on state restructuring would change because of its alliance with the JVP. Parties change slowly although individuals especially politicians, change at quite a rapid pace. In the last two-three months, the JVP has come up with two positive ideas.

First, it explicitly states that Sri Lankan centralised administration should be de-centralised. Secondly, it has recently announced that the party is ready to accept the verdict of the people if people at a referendum decide on a power-sharing constitution.

This shows that a party that is about to exercise governmental power has to negotiate with Thamil nationalism in order to find a solution to the national problem. So these indications and inferences show that the PA notion of power-sharing would be the determining factor in Freedom Alliance's policy formulation on the issue of international relations inside the country.

Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe and his government took a bold step by recommencing negotiations with the LTTE; he and his party should be commended for taking this initiative.

However, the way he and his party engaged in negotiation have shown that their mission has come to end. The authors of the above mentioned book talk about necessary paradigm shifted at the next phase of negotiation.

They have also argued that '(t)he next phase of peace negotiations will only be successful if core issues are addressed, ways are found to engage all principal stakeholders as co-owners of the peace processes and all actors accept the need for a serious transformation of the political system' (p. 29, emphasis added). Principled negotiation does not mean soft engagement with the opponent. It means engaging the other party to develop new options.

In this regard, we found PA approach more flexible. Its notion of interim administration, issue of merger/de-merger, re-demarcation of boundaries shows that PA's preparedness to develop new options goes beyond existing options/positions. One of the principles of integrative/principled negotiation has been that parties should convey each other their positions.

The LTTE has done so; but Prof. Peiris and his party refused to respond. UNF's comments on the ISGA proposals of the LTTE are confined to a mere one page document full of banalities.

On the other hand PA came up with a detailed dissection of the IsGA proposals and at the same time expressed its readiness to consider it as a basis of future negotiations.

So in my opinion, the FA has placed itself in a better position as the FA, particularly its PA component, is having a better perspective for the next phase of the peace talks.

(The writer teaches political economy at the University of Peradeniya)

ATOL 75047
EMERGENCY TRAVEL ONLY
Please Call: 07956 676 360
-SRI LANKA
-SOUTH INDIA
-SINGAPORE

Split in the LTTE, not an internal matter

Dr. Jehan Perera

The open split of the LTTE into northern and eastern wings continues into its second week. Whether it would take a dangerous turn into a fratricidal war would depend on what the LTTE and its Vanni-based leadership decide to do.

However, the rebel leader Col. Karuna has informed the ceasefire monitors that his military units will conform to the requirements of the ceasefire agreement. He has also requested a separate ceasefire agreement with the Sri Lankan government and protection from the Norwegian facilitators. But his request for a separate truce agreement with the Sri Lankan government has been turned down. It would appear that both the Sri Lankan and Norwegian governments are watching the situation without committing themselves to the establishment of new arrangements at this stage.

Fortunately, there seems to be cautious bipartisanship among the two main Sinhalese-dominated parties regarding how to handle the prevailing situation. Neither President Chandrika Kumaratunga nor Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has made statements that seek narrow political advantage out of the emerging events. Perhaps, they realise that the situation is much too dangerous to play politics with, as it can even lead to the breakdown of the ceasefire. On the other hand, a hands-off attitude also may not be the best course of action.

But the split in the LTTE is not yet an accomplished fact as it goes against the strong ideological unity of the LTTE organisation and of the larger Tamil nationalist movement.

Sympathetic chord

Although the breakaway leadership led by Mr Karuna appears confident, they will also be aware of the dangerous course they have taken. On the one hand there is the constant risk of political assassination at which the LTTE has specialist skills. On the other hand, there is the risk of alienating the people. So far the eastern people appear to be supportive of the breakaway leadership. But the question is for how long.

At the present time, Karuna's position in the east appears secure, even though his top ranking deputies have left him for the LTTE. His cadres whom he has trained and whose leader he has been continue to be loyal to him. But they would also be deeply troubled by their leader's rebellion against all they stood for in the past two decades. When Karuna decided to renounce his allegiance to LTTE leader Prabhakaran, he took on an enormous challenge with regard to his own cadres. What will continue to keep his cadres loyal to him would be the continuing support of the civilian population.

In explaining his decision to break away from the LTTE, Karuna has said it was primarily due to the inequitable treatment of the east, both in terms of economic development and the allocation of material and human resources.

This claim has struck a sympathetic chord in the Tamil people of the east. However, in more recent days, Karuna appears to be broadening the line of his ideological attack on his former organisation. Initially, he paid deference to LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, likening him to a god to whom he remained obedient. However, he is now speaking harshly about the leader himself, and casting doubts as to the achievements of the entire Tamil militant struggle.

It is one thing to articulate eastern grievances on the ground. It is quite another to question the rationale of the Tamil militancy, in which he himself has played an important part. From a Tamil nationalist perspective it makes more sense for the Tamil people to be united under a single leadership rather than to be divided. In fact, all those Tamil nationalists who do not have to bear the brunt of living under the LTTE's direct rule, whether in Colombo or abroad, would wish the LTTE to be strong and undivided. It is the Tamil people of the east alone, who bore the brunt of the LTTE's north-centric rule, who would wish to take up a different position.

Military solution

The LTTE's initial reaction to Karuna's act of rebellion was to dismiss him from the organisation, call him a traitor and to order his replacement to take charge of the LTTE's eastern command. Such a strong reaction was in keeping with the LTTE's past practices of dealing with dissent in its own ranks and also within the larger Tamil community. Such persons were either physically eliminated or severely demoted. Perhaps, the LTTE calculated that a strong initial reaction would cause Karuna's support to evaporate. But so far it has not.

The LTTE's confrontational attitude has been supplemented by the disappointment of the larger Tamil community at the sudden turn of events when the Tamil nationalist cause seemed to be going from strength to strength along with the peace process. Sections of the Tamil mainstream media and Tamil expatriates have made common cause with the LTTE against

They see a possible fatal weakening of the Tamil nationalist cause occurring as a result of the present rift. This raises the temptation for that perennial quick fix solution of Sinhalese nationalists, and even of the state apparatus, which is the military solution.

But if two decades of ethnic war are to teach any lessons to the people living in Sri Lanka, it is that military force and propaganda do not suffice to guarantee victory over groups that champion an ethnic or nationalist cause. The LTTE itself was once a very small group. Karuna controls a very large group, numbering as many as 6000 fighters. The LTTE could not be suppressed by either military force or by propaganda. Neither is it likely that Karuna can be suppressed, so long as he keeps the support of the eastern Tamil people. In the event of his being able to maintain his support base amongst the Tamil people, the main threat to him would be the possibility of assassination.

Although the LTTE has been described as one of the most deadly and

powerful militant organisations in the world, this has been in terms of its opposition to the Sri Lankan state. On the other hand, if the LTTE were to seek to use its military strength against the breakaway group in the east, it is likely to get bogged down in the quagmire of protracted war. The absence of contiguous Tamil territory that joins the north and east, will make the LTTE's task of keeping its supply lines intact formidable.

In the next few days the burning issue is not going to be what will best suit a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict. Rather it will be how the LTTE will deal with its former eastern commander and the cadres who are loyal to him. There are essentially three choices. One is to eliminate Karuna through political assassination which would be in accordance with the LTTE's common practice. The second would be to launch a military operation to wrest back the east as was done 15 to 20 years ago with rival militant organisations. For example, the EPRLF in the east who collaborated with the Indian government were shot on the streets in large numbers after the departure of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in 1989. The third would be to negotiate with Karuna regarding the grievances he has articulated in the spirit of the peace process, which is about dialogue, compromise and reaching win-win solutions.

Best option

There is a temptation to see a hidden hand, possibly emanating from India, as being behind the breakaway group. While there may have been external support extended to the Karuna group, the reality of eastern grievances cannot be glossed over. The best option for the LTTE at this time is to act in the spirit of the present peace process, which demands that they take on the characteristics of a political organisation that copes peacefully with pluralism. An acknowledgement of the genuine grievances of the eastern LTTE cadre and the eastern Tamil population would be a constructive first step. Some of the grievances that have been very well articulated by Karuna have their origins in the pre-LTTE period. There needs to be a dialogue on these, rather than a cover up, by both the LTTE and Tamil opinion formers.

Those who are concerned with the Tamil nationalist cause would wish to repair the split in the LTTE. But it is important that the rift be healed through dialogue and compromise that recognises the genuine grievances of the eastern people, and seeks a just solution to them. If violence is used, for whatever purpose, it can cause irreparable damage to the peace process. An LTTE that seeks to resort to a military solution to re-unite itself will send a wrong message to its own cadres about their sincerity to take the peace process with the government forward. It will also frighten the rest of the country about the LTTE's lack of sincerity in solving problems through negotiations and the compromise that negotiations necessarily entail.

Not an internal matter

During the past two decades civil society groups engaged in a great deal of educational work on the pluralism in Sri Lankan society as a whole, and the need for political restructuring on the lines of a federal solution. At the present juncture civil society groups will have an important role to play in promoting a greater dialogue in the wider society on the pluralism within the north east that needs to find expression in appropriate political structures. They should increase their level of engagement with the actors in Tamil society, including the LTTE and the Karuna group.

In particular, civil society and the international community, who have invested so much in the peace process and in non violent means of conflict resolution, need to make it clear that they stand for the option of problem solving dialogue and a negotiated settlement.

The split within the LTTE cannot be considered as a matter internal to the LTTE which it can have leeway to resolve in its own way, whatever may be that way. Reports from the ground in the east show that the people are fearful that the peace they have been enjoying will be lost. This is their primary concern. The threats to the people of Jaffna origin living in the east are unacceptable. The manner in which the LTTE and Karuna attempt to resolve their problem will have repercussions on the ceasefire, the peace process and the entire country. Consequently the attention of the national and international community needs to be focused on the conflict resolution process in the north east.

They need to take up a firm and principled position that a resort to violence by any party will not be tolerated. For its part the government must make a more visible effort in the government-controlled parts of the north east to uphold the safety and security of the civilian population.

Obtaining consensus in plural societies is a rare occurrence and requires wise and patient leadership, such as demonstrated by Nelson Mandela in South Africa. The most appropriate feature of political life in a plural and multi ethnic society is dialogue and compromise. This feature will become more pronounced in Sri Lankan society after the April 2 general election. The most likely result will be a hung Parliament, in which neither of the two main parties obtains a clear majority by itself. The post election scenario is one of multiple parties, including the LTTE and breakaway Karuna group, needing to work with each other to take forward the peace process.

In particular, civil society and the international community, who have invested so much in the peace process and in non violent means of conflict resolution, need to make it clear that they stand for the option of problem solving dialogue and a negotiated settlement.

They need to take up a firm and principled position that a resort to violence by any party will not be tolerated. For its part the government must make a more visible effort in the government-controlled parts of the north east to uphold the safety and security of the civilian population. ❐

SRI LANKA INFORMATION SITE
WWW.srilankans.co.uk

A dim prospect for the peace process

Dr. S. Narapalasingam

The task of negotiating a political settlement has become increasingly complicated by the recent developments since the confrontation between the President and the Prime Minister escalated into a political crisis and the subsequent dissolution of Parliament. The new configuration of parties opposed to the present UNF government and the very large number of parties including one in which the candidates are Buddhist monks. The sudden rift in the LTTE less than a month before voting appears to have made the situation worse. The outcome of the April 2 elections is unpredictable, the only probable prospect being a parliament with no decisive majority capable to take the peace process forward to any meaningful conclusion. These developments have made the prospect for reaching a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict more complex, difficult and dim.

The JVP

Not many moons ago the JVP campaigned against the peace process and Norway's role in brokering the ceasefire and later facilitating the peace talks between the UNF government and the LTTE. The UNF government was accused of "betraying the nation" for allowing the Tigers to strengthen themselves and advance towards "dividing the country". JVP also protested against LTTE's proposals for Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA). Some SLFP leaders too took part in the protest march against the ISGA proposal organized by the Patriotic National Movement (PNM), an ultra nationalist organization having close links with JVP.

The JVP Leader Somawansa Amarasinghe in an interview with the February issue of 'Business Today' had categorically rejected the concept and practice of devolution. He said: "On the national question, people are talking about devolution, division or sharing of power or other formulae. But everyone has become prisoners of devolution....What we say is please stop talking about devolution." He also said that the process that started with the implementation of the MoU has to be reversed.

In an interview with the Sinhala weekly "Lanka" (Sunday Feb 15 issue), Wimal Weerawansa the propaganda secretary of the JVP told that the existing ceasefire agreement entered with the LTTE in February 2002 poses a clear threat to national security. He said: "We, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, have always said that we totally reject this MOU (ceasefire agreement). It is clearly a threat to national security. Within the Alliance we have arrived at an agreement on this with the SLFP and other groups. We do not hope to carry forward the MOU signed in secret by Ranil Wickremesinghe. We have stated through the Alliance Accord that the possibility exists for talks with the LTTE on the basis of fair conditions. Therefore, we have already given attention to drafting and implementing a new Ceasefire Agreement, which will properly ensure national security."

This report created a stir and President Kumaratunga was quick to say that she was the leader of the Alliance and that the ceasefire was not up for discussion. She declared that the new UPFA government would resume talks with the LTTE while honouring the MoU and retaining the Norwegians as facilitators. Weerawansa also tried to play down his earlier statement on the next day saying: "We stand for an actual peace. In that case the people must not get afraid that the war is coming back." But he also said the JVP's alliance agreement with the SLFP included the possibility of holding talks with the Tigers "based on a reasonable and correct foundation".

The claims of UNF and UPFA

Throughout his election campaign Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has been stressing that the peace platform of the UPFA is unstable due to the contradictory stand of the SLFP and the JVP on devolution of power and the peace process is destined to end in failure if they take over after the elections. Ignoring the stalemate in the peace process initiated by the UNF government, he has been saying that the UNF has the experience to handle the peace process, whereas the President has messed up the peace process twice in the past after having talks with the LTTE. The Premier has been urging the masses to vote for the UNP to usher in lasting peace and an era of prosperity. He warned the people against making the wrong choice that will plunge the country in a state of war and deprive the chance of achieving permanent peace by continuing the peace process initiated by his UNF government in February 2002. The UPFA accused him of trying to create fear psychosis among the people to win votes.

Lakshman Kadirgamar a key figure in the UPFA said at a media conference, February 27, while the UPFA government's negotiating team would be small, there would be wide consultations with all stakeholders, including political parties, ethnic groups and civil society. As regards giving a place to the opposition in the negotiating team, he said that the President would involve the opposition in a way Wickremesinghe never involved the President when his government was conducting the peace. On the issue of federalism, Kadirgamar admitted there were differences over it in the UPFA but the alliance had pledged to go by the will of the people. His statement may help in winning some votes but has little relevance to future negotiations with the LTTE.

On the LTTE's proposals for an interim government in the North East, Kadirgamar's statement that an Alliance government would take it up for discussion at the peace talks appears more promising. On continuing to use Norway as a peace facilitator, he said that "some things that Norway had done were not right and that Norway would be told about the parameters within which it could work." Kadirgamar stated at the meeting though the UPFA disagreed with the view that the LTTE are the 'sole representatives' of the Tamils but "the peace talks, as such, would be with the LTTE only." Incidentally, this is the view of TULF leader V. Anandasangaree who is contesting as an independent this time because of differences with other TULF committee members on this issue. Even the LTTE's archrival the EPDP holds the same view.

At the same meeting, the JVP spokesman Wimal Weerawansa replying to the query about another controversial issue of renegotiating the Ceasefire Agreement with the LTTE, said that it would be adhered to at present, but modifications might be taken up in the future. It was obvious

the clarifications given by the UPFA leaders at the meeting were aimed at allaying the fears among the Sinhalese voters that a future UPFA government would not be able to sustain the 'non war' state that had prevailed so far, let alone deliver lasting peace.

The UPFA's manifesto released on March 11 has reaffirmed their commitment to sustain the ceasefire and to a negotiated settlement. It states that the settlement "should be found through a dialogue with the LTTE and other relevant groups and communities so that a political solution could be achieved which would safeguard the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and the equality, democratic and human rights of the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and other communities of Sri Lanka." While rejecting the concept of homeland confined to the particular nationality the manifesto states "the new Constitution will guarantee the right to reside in any place of Sri Lanka, engaging in social and cultural activities to all communities including the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim."

A glaring omission is their position on the present unitary structure and devolution of powers. There is no reference even to the draft constitution presented to Parliament by the PA government in 2000 or to the 2002 Oslo agreement on finding a suitable federal structure acceptable to both the government and the LTTE. What the Information Minister Kadirgamar said at the February 27 media meeting particularly on the ISGA proposals is not reflected in any statements in the manifesto. The impression one gets from the manifesto is that the UPFA hopes to achieve a negotiated settlement within the unitary system. The manifesto is consistent with the stand of the JVP on the ethnic issue stated in the MoU signed on 20 January 2004. If the SLFP sticks rigidly to this unrealistic position, there is absolutely no hope for a negotiated settlement.

The UNF manifesto released on March 16 states that the UNP-led coalition government intends to achieve a negotiated political settlement 'in accordance with the principles set out in the Oslo Declaration, the Tokyo Declaration and the statement by the Tokyo Co-chairs'. With regard to an interim administration (IA) for the North and East, the UNF manifesto has avoided any reference to the controversial ISGA proposals, which according to the LTTE leader are not linked to final political solution. He has said so in a statement to the LTTE's Sinhala paper 'Dedunne'. He is reported to have said: "They do not contain proposals for a framework towards a final solution." The statement that UNF if re-elected will 'seek to establish an IA based on community oriented development as a step towards the formulation and implementation of a permanent political solution to the ethnic question' cannot be interpreted as either rejection or acceptance of LTTE's position that future talks should resume on the basis of their ISGA proposals. The LTTE leader in his statement to 'Dedunne' has reiterated their wider aim with regard to IA. He has said: "Maintenance of law and order, distribution of land and allocation of funds for provincial administration cannot be done without such a body".

The Tamil Tigers

There is also the latest 'Tiger factor' with the TNA contesting as LTTE's proxy. All the candidates standing on the TNA ticket are Tiger loyalists with some closely connected with the movement through the front organizations. Although this time the LTTE is not opposing the polls in the North-East, it has imposed conditions such as the 'ban' on Tamils contesting in the Tamil heartland as candidates of the 'Sinhala parties' to ensure that its authority in the region remains unchallenged. Asked why the LTTE had proposed that it should be allowed to rule the North East for five years without elections, LTTE's political wing leader S. P. Thamilselvan told the correspondent of Hindustan Times (February 27) that "a minimum of five years was necessary to solve the basic problems of a people battered by war for two decades. Once these basic problems are solved, we will establish a system which will meet international norms of democracy and individual rights." He is reported to have said since the LTTE did not recognize the Sri Lankan constitution, they are not contesting in the April 2 parliamentary elections. "The LTTE does not think that a parliament under the present constitution will help the Tamils get their rights. But the Tamil parties may enter parliament and show that the Tamil people support the LTTE," Thamilselvan said. Thus, the snap poll is being used by the LTTE through its proxy, the TNA, to achieve its intermediate aims. These are listed in TNA's election manifesto. (See below.)

LTTE Split

The killing of United National Front (UNF) candidate Sundarampillai in Batticaloa and Yogendran an EPDP activist in Valaichchanai at the beginning of March just one month before the general elections has damaged LTTE's new stature that the Tiger leadership has recently built as an organization working for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The LTTE has not publicly owned the killings but the statements made soon after by LTTE's Eastern military leader Col. Karuna, implied that cadres attached to Pottu Amman, the LTTE's intelligence wing chief, was responsible for the killings.

Accusing the LTTE hierarchy of discriminating against the cadres from the Eastern Province, of engaging them in sentry and security work in the forward lines and bunkers in the North and providing security to more than thirty top level functionaries of the LTTE enabling them to move about in their luxury vehicles without any fear, and of asking for 1000 more cadres from the East to be sent to Wanni, Col Karuna had asked for an autonomous arrangement for the Batticaloa-Amparai district under him under the overall leadership of only Prabhakaran, and no one else from the Wanni leadership. Karuna went further and told newspapers that the Tigers were no longer the sole representatives of the Tamil people. He has also asked for a separate agreement with the GoSL, though he will honour the current agreement signed by the LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran.

With Karuna's defection, LTTE's reputation as a regimented organization with highly disciplined and dedicated cadres who are ever ready to obey the orders of the leader and sacrifice their lives in the course of performing their duties has been damaged.

Moreover, the concept of Tamil homeland is founded on the unification of the Northern and Eastern provinces as one region. The reasons given for the rebellion, question the very foundation of this concept. It is significant that the split based on the distinction between the Tamils in the north and the east has surfaced at a time when the LTTE's strength at the negotiating table apart from their military prowess depended crucially on the solidarity of Tamils in the North and East. This startling crisis that is threatening to turn into a violent clash between two rival Tiger factions will have a bearing on the negotiations for a permanent political settlement if it remains unresolved.

Tamil National Alliance

The manifesto of the TNA drafted in consultation with LTTE leaders and released on March 1 state: (i) The LTTE should be accepted as the sole representative of the Tamil community in the country. (ii) "The Sinhala nation should come forward soon to resume peace talks with the Liberation Tigers for establishing the Interim Self Governing Authority." (iii) The urgent need for the resumption of the peace process and its continuation to achieve lasting peace in the country. (iv) A political solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka should be based on the recognition of the Tamil speaking people's homeland, the Tamils' identity as a distinct nation, and their right to self-determination. It said, an acceptable solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka should necessarily ensure the distinct identity of the Muslim people, their security, the culture and their economy. If the LTTE's intention is to establish that the Tamil people have endorsed them as the sole representative through the democratic process, then the killings and other methods of preventing free and fair election are counter productive.

The manifesto also has a warning to the southern polity. "If the Sri Lankan state continues to reject the legitimate aspirations of the Tamil people and continues to deny them an acceptable political solution; and if military occupation and state oppression continue instead, then establishing the sovereignty and independence of the Tamil nation on the basis of its right to self determination would become an inexorable reality."

Addressing the election meeting in Trinomialee town on March 7, the TNA leader R. Sampanthan said: "Tamils should utilize this opportunity (April elections) to tell the international community in clear terms that they are behind the LTTE and its ISGA proposal and any further negotiation which is to lead to find a lasting political solution to the Tamil national question should be based on the ISGA."

After the split in the Tiger movement, the leader of the Batticaloa district TNA group, former MP Joseph Pararajasingham along with the other Batticaloa district TNA candidates suspended their election campaign in the Batticaloa and Amparai districts. They are reported to have resumed the election campaign supporting the Karuna faction. Addressing a public meeting held in Batticaloa district, Pararajasingham has reportedly declared that LTTE are not the sole representatives of the Tamil people! With the TNA candidates of the North holding on to the contrary view, the TNA also seems to be now divided on this basic issue. Clearly, the role that TNA intended to play in strengthening LTTE's position in future negotiations has been diminished by the split in the LTTE.

A way forward

Among the reasons given by Sumanasiri Liyanage, lecturer political economy at the University of Peradeniya in his article (Daily Mews March 6) to some serious problems encountered during the period the UNF government managed the stalled peace process are:(i) the incapacity of Prof. Peiris and the GoSL delegates in handling peace talks, (ii) subordinating the agenda of the peace process for the benefit of UNF's political agenda. So the idea was to drag it on until the next Presidential election, and (iii) the absence of an agreed analytical framework for conducting the peace talks. The UNF also marginalized the Muslims in the Eastern province and their security was ignored during the peace process.

The fact of the matter is that the UNF has no definite position on the issue of restructuring the state on federal lines, or otherwise that may lead to the resolution of the conflict.

There are many lessons to be learnt from the past mistakes made in negotiating a political settlement both by the previous PA and UNF governments. Whichever government that comes to power in the April general election should not rush to the negotiating table without first doing the preliminary work necessary to avoid getting into a stalemate as happened last year. At the same time, they must not think that time is on their side and the problem will somehow get resolved in due course. Not only the leaders in the south but also the LTTE leader should realize the importance of reaching a settlement within a reasonable time. The latest crisis in the east could have been avoided if the peace process that started with the ceasefire agreement more than two years ago had progressed speedily.

Tyrol Ferdinands, Kumar Rupasinghe, Paikiyasothy Saravanamuttu, Jayadeva Uyangoda and Norbert Ropers in their recent publication titled 'The Sri Lankan Peace Process at Crossroads' have made recommendations to (a) all parties; (b) the leaders of the two main parties; (c) the LTTE; (d) Muslim polity; (e) Norway as facilitator; (f) the international community; (g) the donor community; (h) civil society; and (i) the Diaspora for them to act responsibly and effectively to ensure the success of the negotiation process. Their perception of the problem is sagacious from the standpoint of achieving ethnic harmony and permanent peace in the entire country. The Tigers consider it primarily as a dispute between two existing powers and the negotiations are for deciding on the areas where each authority will exercise powers separately and jointly. It is most unlikely the LTTE will abandon their nationalist outlook and view the conflict resolution from a national perspective.

Nevertheless, the suggestion made by the authors that the LTTE should "negotiate a framework agreement or an Interim Constitution based on the concept of a federal multi-ethnic Sri Lankan State that should give expression to the rightful claims of all minorities in the North East and in the South" is very useful if permanent peace is to result from a political settlement. It is in this area that the assistance of the international community, particularly the donor community is most needed. The suggestions made to all southern parties and particularly to the leaders of the two main parties though relevant and useful, have little chance of being followed voluntarily. Some pressure from the civil society and the international community is necessary.

The LTTE leadership has stressed repeatedly that any political discussion has to be outside the parameters of the present constitution. If the negotiations, particularly in the context of new problems that have surfaced since end of October last year are to proceed in the right direction, it is paramount that there is first a general consensus on the broad framework for detailed discussions. If the LTTE do not wish to discuss the framework for negotiations with both the government and opposition parties, then discussions amongst these parties on the framework should precede the negotiations on the same with the LTTE. There are several advantages in determining jointly the framework for negotiations as early as possible. It will help in setting up the long overdue interim administration without getting into endless discussion on the ISGA proposals. This will also make it possible to start the delayed reconstruction and rehabilitation work with the foreign aid pledged at the Tokyo donor meeting June last year but not released because of lack of progress in the efforts to seek a negotiated settlement. And importantly it will provide appropriate lead for the negotiations on major issues. ❐

CLASSIFIED ADS

First 20 words £10. each additional word 60p charge for Box No.£3..Prepayment essential.

The Advertisement Manager,
Tamil Times Ltd., PO Box 121,
Sutton, Surrey SM1 3TD, United Kingdom
Phone: 020 - 8644 0972
Fax: 020 - 8241 4557
E-Mail: admin@tamiltimes.org

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek attractive University educated bride living in UK, minimum age 25 years, for their doctor son, 30 years and working in London. Send horoscope and details to M 1369 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek bridegroom, 35-40 years, preferably of similar background and qualification for their fair daughter, 34, 5'3", Engineering Ph.D. holder, scientist in technology development firm in England. Please send horoscope, details to M 1385 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek suitable partner for their son, 32, British citizen, professionally qualified, employed. Send details to M 1386 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek suitable partner, medical doctor, 23-27, working in UK, for their doctor son, 28, graduated in 1998 and specialising in internal medicine. Please send chart, email address and telephone number to M 1387 c/o Tamil Times.*

About People and Events

OBITUARY

Mr. Chelliah Rajasingham, *born 10.01.1911, retired O.I.C, Health Unit, Kekirawa, Sri Lanka; educated Jaffna College and Manipay Hindu College; son of late Mr. & Mrs Chelliah of Vandiyar Walavoo, Uduvil; son-in-law of Dr.& (Mrs) Appukudi Suppiah of Tellipalai; beloved husband of late Rajaluxmy; loving father of Captain Rajah Baladharan (formerly Air Lanka, at present UK), Gitanjali (London,), Dr. Rajah Rahuladharan (New Jersey, USA), Jeyanjali (California, USA), Menaka (London), Nirupa (Connecticut, USA); beloved father-in-law of Jeyanthi, Shantikumar (both of UK), Mary, Dr. Thangarajah (both of USA), Sivapatheeswaran (UK) and Thayalakhandan (USA); dearly loved grandfather of Dr. Janakan (UK), Siveshwar, Hariharan, John-Rajah, Annaluxmy (all of USA), Meera, Dharani, Sayini (all of UK), Lavan, Tulasi (Connecticut, USA); brother of late Thuraisingham (Malasia), late Veerasingham (Chunnakam), late Sivasingham (Bambalapitiya), Sivapackiam and Rathnamani (both of Vandiyar Walavoo); brother-in-law of late Thambirajah (Parakaduwa), late Sivagnanam (Malasia), late Apputhurai (Uduvil), late Palasundaram (Brunei), Dr. S. Balakrishnan (Point Pedro), Mrs Jeyaluxsmy Kanagaratnam (Sydney), late Ariyam (Chunnakam) and Sivayokam (Bambalapitiya) passed away peacefully in London on 3rd March 2004. Funeral was held in Surrey.*

The family sends their sincere thanks to all friends and relatives who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and condolence messages

– Mrs G. Shantikumar, 20 Cheyham Way, Sutton, Surrey SM2 7HX. Tel: 0208 642 2604.

IN MEMORIAMS

First Year Remembrance

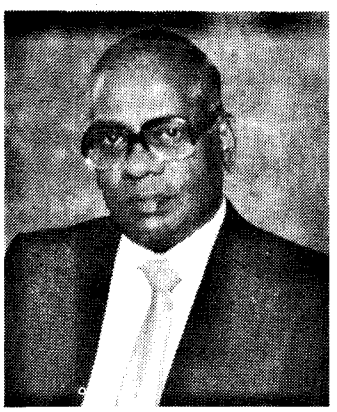
In ever loving memory of ***Dr. N. Sahathevarajan*** *on the first anniversary of his passing away on 14th March 2003.*

Fondly remembered and sadly missed by his beloved wife Thabonithy; loving children Rajkumar, Niranjala and Girija; daughter-in-law Dr. Jane Rajan; sons-in-law Dr. Ravindran and Dr. Kesavan; grandchildren Dr. Vanaja, Roshan, Catriona, Duncan, Tamara and Devan.

– 'Long Woods', 26 Wergs Road, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton WJ6 8TD. Tel: 01902 579228.

Third Death Anniversary

Dr. Nagalingam Kandasamy



26.03.1923 – 16.03.2001

To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die

In loving and treasured memory of a devoted husband, father, grandfather and father-in-law.

Affectionately remembered by all the family.

Third Anniversary Remembrance

Mrs Somawathy Kanagasabai

Birth: 26.01.1916 **Rest:** 17.03.2001

Sadly missed and lovingly remembered by children Chandra, Indra, Logendra, Yogendra, Ambi, Gowri and Jayanthi; daughters-in-law Sakunthala, Kamalasani, Rathy and Yoga and son-in-law Ragu

– 34 Woodcote Valley Road, Purley, Surrey CR3 3AJ.

FORTHCOMINGS EVENTS

Apr 1 Ekaathasi; 11 a.m. Colombuthurai Yogaswamigal Abhisekham and Guru Poojah followed by Prasatham at Shree Ganapathy Temple, 123 Effra Road, London SW19. All Welcome.

2. Pirathosam; Feast of St. Francis

4. Full Moon; Panguni Uthiram and Paarwathi Kalyanam

7. Feast of St. John Baptist

8. Sankadakara Chathurthi

11. Feast of St. Stanislaus

13. Tharna Hindu New Year's Day

15. Ekaathasi

16. Pirathosam

18. Amavasai

21. Karthigai; Feast of St. Anelm

23. Chathurthi; Feast of St. George

25. Sasti; Feast of St. Mark

27. 7.30 p.m. Concert by famous musicians to pay homage to the great Tabla player, Ustad AllaRakha at Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank, London SE1. Artists include Shankar Mahadevan, U. Shrinivas, Taufiq Quereshi, Dinesh Pandit, Pete Lockett, M. Bala Chandra, Soumik Datta and others. For tickets telephone Box Office 08703 800 400.

29. Feast of St.Catherine of Siena

At Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road,London W14 9HQ. Tel: 020 7381 3086/ 4608.

On Sunday, 4th April 2004 at 6 p.m.

SAMMILAN

A Concert Highlighting the Unity of Indian Music will be presented by Smt. Sivasakthi Sivanesan and her students

The programme combines the beauty of North and South Indian Vocal and Instrumental Music and is accompanied by Pandit Vishwa Prakash – **Harmonium,** Balu Ragu Raman - **Violin,** Vijaykumar Jagtap and his students – **Sitar** Rajkumar Misra - **Tabla,** Chithambaranathan - **Morsing**

Books on South Indian Music and Dance authored by the late **Iyall – Isai Varuthi Bramashree Yalpanam N. Veeramani Iyer** will be launched

Book your seats early to avoid disappointment.

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couple on their recent wedding.

Sivarooban *son of Mrs. P. Sivapathasundaram of Vanniasingam Lane, Thavady North, Kokkuvil and late Mr. Sivapathasundaram and* ***Kalaichelvy****, daughter of Mr. & Mrs Kandiah of 99/4 Kelani Ganga Mills Road, Mattakuliya, Colombo 15 on 1st February 2004 at Sri Venkateshwara Maha Vishnu Devasthanam, Colombo 15.*

Nesan, *son of Mr & Mrs Shanmugam of 59 West Hill, Sanderstead, Surrey CR2 0SB and* ***Padmini,*** *daughter of Dr. & Mrs V.V.Sastry of Dein Court, Boat Lane, Sprotbrough, Doncaster DN5 7LU on 17th December 2003 at Grand Kakatiya Hotel, Hyderbad.*

A well attended reception was held on 6th March 2004 at Savill Court Hotel, Egham, Surrey.

Twin Arangetrams of Carnatic Vocal Music and Mridangam of Sainthavi and her brother Lavan

On the 25th August 2003 the Beck Theatre in Hayes was the venue of the celebration of the Arangetrams of Vocal Music by Kumari Sainthavi and Mridangam by her brother Lavan. The stage was tastefully decorated and the auditorium filled to capacity by relatives of the debutants, well wishers and music lovers. Sainthavi, aged 16 is the disciple of Thamil Isai Vani, Nageswari Bramanandha well renowned Carnatic musician and teacher. Miruthangam accompaniment was by 14 year old Lavan whose Guru is Vidvan Anandanadesan.

The opening piece was the Varnam -Chalamela in Sankarabarnam which was followed by Vathapi in Hamsadwani both rendered with perfect diction. The kucheri warmed up with the scintillating number Sathinsene in Arabi a popular kriti of Saint Thiyagaraja. The repertoire was full of variety and included compositions from Papanasan Sivan, Tharmapuri Subra Iyer, Maharajapuram V Santhanam, Lalgudi Jeyaraman, Ganam Krishna Iyer, Yalpanam Veeramani Iyer, Yogarswamikal and Arunagiri Nathar. Sainthavi sang "Ennum Irrakkam" in Hamsananthi with devotion and bhava. Her pronunciation of Thamil words was exceptionally good for a child brought up in the UK. Credit goes to the guru and also the parents Mr and Mrs Sivapalan. Sainthavi's Control of talam-Kala piramanam was also worthy of praise.

Thodi was chosen as the main raga and this was rendered with ease and near perfection. The Guest of

DIY General Insurance

www.armassociates.co.uk - useful links - ARM Online Insurance

Honour that evening Jeya Alaki Arunagirinathan commended Sainthavi for singing that difficult raga so well. The rendering of the favourite song Karthikeya with niraval and good swara pirayokam deserves special praise. Pallavi in Shanmugapriya was very well executed and handled very aptly. The gurus both Mrs Bramanandha and Anadanadesan have worked hard to achieve such good coordination by the singer and miruthangist. The kucheri was very enjoyable since pieces rendered were well chosen and were excellent compositions by a wide list of famous composers. 'Singara Velan' in Ananda Bhairavi and 'Thiruketheswara' in Dharbari Kanada specially pleased my taste that evening. 'Kurai onrum illai' by Rajaji reminded me of MS Subbuluxmy as she often sings that song. It is worthy of mention that the guru Mrs Bramanandha also has been singing this song in most of her concerts .The concert concluded with a brilliant thillana in Mohanakalyani and Thiruppukal in Saranga.

Lavan who also had debut presentation on miruthangam played extremely well supporting his sister all through the concert. One could observe the nod of approval from leading exponents of mrithangam from among the audience. He played the thaniavarthanam exceptionally well with clarity and good control of tala. He demonstrated his competence in Pallavi. His nadaipeetam was excellent and commendable. Credit must go to his guru Sri Anandanadesan. There is no doubt that Lavan has a good future as a percussion artist. The evening was on the whole very entertaining and enjoyable. Sangeeta Vidwan Smt Gnanambikai Pathmasikamani on the violin, Bangalore Prakash on gatam, Kabilan on morsing provided excellent support to the young debutants.

Dr M Theivendra, Chairman of the Tamil Association of Brent spoke of the contribution made by Sainthavi, Lavan and their parents to the association and the Tamil school, while congratulating the day's stars Sainthavi and Lavan. The Chief Guest Dr S Navaratnam spoke of the merits of fine arts and carnatic music in particular in uplifting the spirit, the Aatman. He also pointed out the benefits on physical well-being of human beings when they listen or sing music with deep involvement. He congratulated the two gurus, the debutants, and their parents while requesting the artistes not to stop practicing after the arangetram but to continue to take further lessons, listen to good artists in person or to recorded music. The compere that evening Smt. Anandarani Balendra did a good job with her clear expressive announcements.

- Kalpana Sekar

Kalaimamani Bhushany Kalyanaraman

Single-minded devotion to Carnatic music — that sums up Bhushany Kalyanaraman. Hers is an extraordinary tale, spanning oceans. Born and brought up in Colombo, Sri Lanka, it was a typical Tamil household where her father used to ensure that everyone was awake at 5 a.m., reciting the Tiruvempavai. A renowned musician, her father had won the title "Sangita Bhushanam" from Annamalai University. All her sisters too sang well.

Love of Carnatic music brought Bhushany to Chennai, at 16,to stay and study music at the Government Music College. She went back to Sri Lanka, to teach music at a Jaffna college. The riots in 1982 brought her back to India, drawn by her deep admiration for her subsequent guru and husband, Tanjore S.Kalyanaraman, senior disciple of the legendary G.N.B.

A congenial atmosphere prevailed in her marital home, with a very supportive mother-in-law. "My husband was totally immersed in music much of the time," recalls Bhushany. "He never took any fee from his many students, he was a very stern man, a strict taskmaster, and a perfectionist. His family was quite well to do, which allowed him to concentrate on music. A veritable genius as a vocalist, he even had many senior musicians coming to him for guidance. He has been my only guru, after my father. I'm what I'm today only because of him," says a nostalgic Bhushany. Sadly Kalyanaraman passed away a few years ago, leaving a big void in the music world, and in Bhushany's life.

A senior vocalist today, Bhushany has number of students both here and abroad, and many foreign students of Indian origin, who come to live with and learn from her. Many of her foreign-based students have had their formal arangetrams, proving her success as a teacher.

Today Bhushany is an Indian citizen; so much at home is she in India. "I've been all over the world, except Russia. I like it best here. I stay abroad for two-three months, to teach and perform," says Bushany.

Her ambition is to establish a school for Carnatic music in S. Kalyanaraman's name, both here and abroad. Taped lessons too would bridge the distance, in her absence. Grateful for everything that music has bestowed on her, she also wishes to do something for destitute women and children "to be able to reach out to people who do not have the luxury of music, people weighed down by pressing basic needs, to survive."

A Sri Lankan nation ever appreciative of Tamil culture and Carnatic music has honoured her with "GANA RATNA". Sri Lankan organisations in London have had her sing for fund raisers in 2001 and 2003. Bhushany is a fortunate person — she has the best of both Sri Lanka and India, the best gained by besting life's many odds.

(Courtesy- The Hindu)

Australian Newsletter

Tamils are an emerging ethnic community in Australia. They live across the continental Australia and in large numbers in the east coast of the country. Early Tamil arrivals in the continent may be traced to 1970s. Estimated Tamil population during the first decade or so was in the region of 3,000 to 3,500 and puffed up since 1980s. According to 1996 census 6,251 Tamils lived in Melbourne, capital of the state of Victoria, second only to Sydney's 9,072, the capital of New South Wales, in an overall Tamil population tally of 18,690. However, the recent estimate puts the number in the region of 30,000 and indeed swelling rather rapidly. Tamils in Australia are mostly of Ceylonese, Indian, Malaysian, Singaporean, Mauritius and Fijian origin. One common feature amongst migrants is their keenness to preserve their identity while integrat-

ing in mainstream society in their country of domicile. Tamils living in Australia are no exception. Social and cultural organizations amongst Tamils actively promote diverse interest groups. Hindu temples are located in all the major cities across Australia, Tamil Churches deliver prayers and sermon in Tamil and Islamic faith continue to address the religious needs of their members and hence, it is possible to conclude that religious needs of Tamils are addressed at appropriate level within the community and with the active support of federal, state and local governmental organizations. Opportunities exist in abundance insofar as the preservation of Tamil language. Tamil language is offered as a subject at the university entrance level. Tamil media groups serve as a vital source of information to the community. Community based broadcasting groups conducts programs in Tamil all over Australia. There are privately managed broadcasting groups operate in the major cities and a state sponsored broadcasting facility which offers a one hour slot nationally per week. Newspapers and magazines are published in Tamil and English. Cultural bonanzas and Arangetrams are regular occurrences. Bharathanatyam is gaining popularity in the mainstream society and is fast becoming a regular feature in multicultural bonanzas.

Sivasupramaniam Sitsabesan

'The Arts of Bharath in London' Author : Dr R.Nitthiyananthan

கலாநிதி இரத்தினவரி திருஞானசுந்தரம்

இலண்டனில்
வளர்ச்சி பெறும் பரதக்கலை

"London should become the centre that demonstrates to the world how ideally an arangetram should be organised and presented" concludes Dr R.Nitthiyananthan in his booklet in Tamil. That statement clearly indicates the drive that motivated him to put down his thoughts, arising out of many years of experience, into writing.

Dr Nitthiyananthan is no stranger to oriental cultural functions. Having attended a number of such functions and been the chief guest at many of them, it is not surprising that he felt the need to put into words how best such functions could be organised.

The 36 paged booklet opens with a preface by Somu. Then there is an introduction about Bharatha Nattyam with accounts about the significant individuals from both South India and Sri Lanka, who rescued that art from corruption and oblivion.

The book then deals with the current situation with regard to this art in countries other than India and Sri Lanka. It is difficult to give a collective name to these countries. One is tempted to use the term 'Western Countries' but then Australia and New Zealand would not fit that description.

As to the organisation of an arangetram (the first public performance of an artiste), I am not quite sure how the parents of the young artistes would feel about it, but I must admit to silently agreeing with the author that quite often it would have been better if some of the youngsters had learnt and practised the art a little more before being prematurely pushed on to the stage.

Having made this observation Dr Nitthiyananthan moves on to the practicalities of organising an arangetram - the need to be prompt about starting time ; not spending too much time on speeches and with the thanks giving activities and many other such useful hints.

I am sure it is the expectation of Dr Nitthiyananthan that, having brought these observations into the public arena, there would be a change in the appropriate direction. Every parent contemplating the organisation of an arangettam, whether they eventually agree with what is said or not, would benefit by reading the various advice in this book.

- Raja Thayaparan

Published by Ratnam Foundation,
179 Norval Road, North Wembly,
Middlesex HA0 3SX, UK.
Tel: 020 8904 5939 Price £3.00.

Tamil Union of Herts

*The **Tamil Union of Herts** (TUH) proudly announces a special **Kalai Vilah** to celebrate its service to the community for more than **20 years.***

Formed in 1983, the Tamil Union of Herts had its humble beginnings in Watford, Hertfordshire. Now it is a fully-fledged organization serving a wider community here and in our homelands. Its great strength has always been its ability to attract well-meaning people within its fold and direct all their energies to help the needy in the community and support their just causes.

Over the years, the Union was able to extend substantial financial assistance to numerous charities, rehabilitation centres and medical projects. It was able to mobilize and encourage people here to be actively involved in political and charitable causes while upholding total impartiality.

*The Union has also been an ideal platform and has provided a mechanism for our people here to thrive with a community spirit through various cultural and social activities. The **Herts Tamil School** (HTS) is an offshoot of the Union and has been in existence since 1985. It is now based at Parkgate Junior School in Watford and holds its sessions on Sundays.*

For further information please contact Logan Rasiah 01923 463466 or Dr Isweran 01923 282078 or Mr Jeyarajah 01442 399564

கலை விழா

at Parmiter's School, High Elms Lane,
Garston, Watford.
on Saturday 3rd April 2004 from 7.00 – 11 p.m.
Admission: Free
Programme includes:

- *Song recital and a drama by the children of the Herts Tamil School*
- *Classical Instrumental Music by Gajan Rudrakumar and his friends (Violin, keyboard, Thabla, Morsing and Thavil)*
- *"Odissi" Classical Dance from Orissa, India and Contemporary Dance – by Kalithasan and Vanitha (Solo & Duet)*
- *Drama – "Rolls Royce" - A comedy play produced and directed by "Master" Manoharan*

You are cordially invited to attend the function and join in our celebrations.

Western Jewellers
Jewellers & Gem Merchants
230 Upper Tooting Road
London SW17 7EW
Opening Hours
Monday to Saturday
10.00am -6.30pm
Sunday
11.00am-5.30pm
Telephone:
020 8767 3445
Silk Emporium
SILK
EMPORIUM
122 Upper Tooting Road
London SW17 7EN
Tel : 020 8672 1900
Season's Best Is "Summer"
Saree's Best Is "Silk Emporium Sarees"
WESTERN
Jewellers & Textiles
5 Plaza Parade, 29 – 33 Ealing Road,
Wembley, Middlesex HA0 4YA
Tel : 020 8903 0909

airfare direct

COLOMBO fr £450 + Tax

This offer is valid during the following periods:
25 December 03 till 03 April 04
12 April 04 till 30 June 04

Czech Airlines - Cyprus Airways Fares to Colombo available on request.
Hotels Available in Colombo:
Holiday Inn, Galle Face Hotel,
Mount Lavinia Hotel and many more.

We offer all travel related services.
Please call our travel consultants
for all your travel requirements.
Travel Insurance, Airport Transfer,
Hotel Booking etc.

COLOMBO

Qatar Airways	fr £380 + taxes
Royal Jordanian	fr £360 + taxes
Kuwait airways	fr £350 + taxes
Gulf Air	fr £395 + taxes

PROMOTIONAL FARE TO THE FAR EAST AND INDIA
£400 + Tax Bangkok Kuala Lumpur Singapore | £415 + Tax Madras, Trichi Trivandrum Bangalore
Stop overs in Colombo are not permitted for these offers

218 Archway Road,
Highgate, London N6 5AX
F: 0870 350 0153
E: info@holidays2srilanka.com

Call us on
Tel: 020 8340 2121

Travel RIGHT

The RIGHT people to do business with

82 MITCHAM ROAD TOOTING SW17 9NG

MAIN AGENT FOR SriLankan Airlines, Qatar Airways, Royal Jordanian, Air India, Egyptair, Garuda Indonesia

Preferred Main Agent for Colombo, Madras & Far East

Colombo Return £478 + taxes
GET A FREE TRIP
TO ANY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING DESTINATIONS:
Madras, Trichi, Trevandrum, Singapore, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta or Hong Kong.

Qatar Airways Qatar Airways **Special offer from £ 380**

Cyprus Airways
CYPRUS AIRWAYS **Colombo Return £335 + Taxes**

Flight +Accommodation to DUBAI
Qatar Airways **4 nights = £280 + Taxes p/p**
3 People Sharing
(Valid until the end of March)

TRANSFER FROM AIRPORT PLUS ONE NIGHT B&Bin WELLAWATTE ONLY £15

ROYAL JORDANIAN **Return Fares to Colombo FROM £360**

TRANSFER FROM AIRPORT PLUS ONE NIGHT B&Bin WELLAWATTE ONLY £15

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS

020 8767 7775
FAX: 020 8767 5991, MOBILE 07850 876921
E-MAIL: info@skybooker.com

IATA ATOL 75766

✪ TRAVEL ✪ SHIPPING ✪ AIR FREIGHT ✪ TRAVEL ✪ SHIPPING ✪ AIR FREIGHT ✪

GLEN CARRIERS LTD

The most trusted name in the business

18 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE SRI LANKAN COMMUNITY

Most Competitive Airfares to Colombo & other worldwide destinations

MAIN AGENT FOR

SriLankan Airlines · Czech Airlines · Saudi Arabian Airlines · Qatar Airways · Kuwait Airways · Royal Jordanian · Cyprus Airways

HOLIDAY INN GALLE FACE

£22 PER PERSON SHARING DOUBLE ROOM - B/B

★ SHIPPING AND AIR FRIEGHT SERVICE TO COLOMBO AND OTHER WORLD DESTINATIONS

NEXT SAILINGS

03 April ETA Colombo -23 April

★ THE MOST EASY CLEARANCE OF YOUR CARGO AT OUR MODERN BONDED WAREHOUSE

LAKSIRISEVA

66 NEW NUGE ROAD PELIYAGODA

SRILANKAN AIRLINES

To 30th June From £ 450

Colombo Only

Valid 3 Months/conditions apply

12 April - 15 July	From £478
16 July - 09 Dec	From £543
10 Dec - 24 Dec	From £778
25 Dec-19 Mar 05	From £543

FREE EXTENSION TO : Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Madras, Trevandrum, Trichi, Bombay, or Delhi

ONLY TAXES ARE PAYABLE

QATAR AIRWAYS

Return from to Colombo promotional fare £380

02 Apr - 11 Apr	From £540
12 Apr - 15 Jul	From £435
16 Apr - 19 Aug	From £540
20 Aug - 09 Dec	From £435
10 Dec - 24 Dec	From £650
25 Dec - 31 Dec	From £435

PLEASE CALL US FOR FARES TO OTHER DESTINATIONS

CYPRUS AIRWAYS

To 31st March

From £ 335

01 Apr - 30 Jun	From £377
01 July - 31 Aug	From £457
01 Sept - 30 Oct	From £377

FARESSUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

UNBELIEVABLE OFFER FROM SRILANKAN AIRLINES TO SKYWARD MEMBERS

Fly to Colombo Only - Surrender of 10000Points

ECONOMY CLASS £250 - BUSINESS CLASS £935

BUSINESS CLASS 15000 POINTS

PLEASE RING US FOR OTHER SPECIAL FARES ON 020 - 8743 7353

ALL ABOVE FARES ARE EXCLUDING AIRPORT TAXES AND HANDLING CHARGES - CREDIT CARD ACCEPTED - SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

ATOL 4395 PROTECTED

14 ALLIED WAY, OFF WARPLE WAY, ACTON, LONDON W3 0RQ

020 8740 8379, 020 8749 0595, 020 8743 7353

E-mail: glencarriers@aol.com (Fax: 020 - 8740 4229) Website: www.glencarriers.co.uk

IATA

SKYWINGS

TRAVEL AGENTS

MAIN AGENT FOR SRI LANKAN AIRLINES, QATAR AIRWAYS, EGYPT AIR, GARUDA INDONESIA, AIR INDIA & ROYAL JORDANIAN

Preferred Main Agent for Colombo, Madras & Far East

MAIN AGENT FOR SriLankan Airlines · Qatar Airways

SRILANKAN AIRLINES AWARD FOR PASSENGER SALES

COLOMBO(rtn)

FROM **£478** + TAX

GET A FREE TRIP

TO ANY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING DESTINATIONS: Madras, Trichi, Trevandrum, Singapore, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta or Hong Kong.

Flight +Accommodation to DUBAI

Qatar Airways

4 nights = £280 + Taxes p/p

3 People Sharing

(Valid until the end of March)

Cyprus Airways

COLOMBO(rtn)

£335 +Taxes

On Cyprus Airways

ROYAL JORDANIAN

COLOMBO(rtn)

FROM **£360** +Taxes

On Royal Joprdanian Airlines

QATAR AIRWAYS SPECIAL FARE TO COLOMBO

Qatar Airways

From £380 +Taxes

BUSINESS CLASS From £1050 +Taxes

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR CREDIT CARDS

119 TOOTING HIGH STREET, LONDON SW17 0SY

TEL: 020- 8672 9111 (6 LINES)

FAX: 020-8672 0951 MOBILE: 07850 876 921 (24 HOURS)

Internet: http:// www.skywings.co.uk e-mail: bala@skywings.co.uk

IATA

ATOL 75766